The Thesis Committee for Margaret Frazier Mitts
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following Thesis:

Roni Horn's *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example)* and the Psychogeography of Looking

APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

_____
Ann Reynolds, Supervisor

_____
Michael Charlesworth

Roni Horn's *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example)* and the Psychogeography of Looking

by

Margaret Frazier Mitts

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Dr. Starenko, Dr. Weaver, Mr. Hurley, and Ms. Getzen without whom I would not observe and read like I now do.

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Abstract

Roni Horn's *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example)* and the Psychogeography of Looking

Margaret Frazier Mitts, M.A.

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Supervisor: Ann Reynolds

"(When you see your reflection in water, do you recognize the water in you?)" So asks a footnote of Roni Horn's *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example)*, a work comprised of fifteen annotated photographs of the surface of water. The text of the six hundred total footnotes record Horn's own thoughts and associations that emerged as she looked at the fifteen photographs of the river Thames. In this thesis, I argue that this work suggests a mode of looking that, instead of seeking a singular meaning, is more akin to the generative wandering of psychogeographers. The psychogeographic practice, of walking city streets and recording one's observations thereof, arose out of an effort to understand the complex intersection of the social, economic, political, and personal that affects a person's experience of urban space. Consisting of alternating immersion in urban space and withdrawal for personal reflection, psychogeographic wandering can be understood as a way to navigate city space akin to the selective and generative act of

reading. To expand on this comparison and more closely triangulate this type of looking, I compare Horn's work to Patrick Keiller's 1994 film *London*, which follows the psychogeographic expeditions of Robinson and the narrator through the eponymous city, and W. G. Sebald's 2001 novel *Austerlitz* which, in its interspersing of black and white photographs in the text, reveals the entanglement of history, memory, and place to the reader alongside the titular character.

If these three works allow a viewer to participate in a sort of creation alongside their respective creators, what kind of reading are they figuring a viewer to engage in? What assumptions are these works making or refusing to make about the identity of this viewer? And is this type of looking applicable beyond the gallery's walls or the book's pages? I investigate these questions, among others, in the friction that results from rubbing these works together and I hope to approach an explanation of the type of looking these works engender, one that emerges through relation.

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Triangulation and Tools

Roni Horn was born in New York City in 1955 and began visiting Iceland in 1975. The island country's volatility and isolation attracted and continues to draw her. Its dramatic weather, changing moment to moment, means she is often alone camping in its roiling landscape still being formed by volcanic activity. She revels in isolation, bathing in the burbling natural springs that pock its surface. When asked "why Iceland?" she responds, "I guess the real reason is the relationship to yourself that is possible in a place like that. There's nothing mediating it. There is nothing to obscure or make more complex a perception or a presence."[1] Most of Horn's oeuvre, including drawing, sculpture, series, books, and installations of photographs, and text, has since revolved around her frequent trips to the island country that give her time and space to follow trains of thought more free of outside labels or mediation than in the streets of New York City and to explore what it means to truly know a place and oneself in relation to it.

A series of books called *To Place* punctuate Horn's explorations of Iceland and capture themes central to her practice. She focuses each instalment on a different aspect of Iceland in an effort to locate herself in relation to that aspect of the place through text, photographs, and drawings. The sixth instalment, *Pooling Waters* is split into two volumes: the first volume contains photographs of the spaces created by and in relation to the geothermal hot springs of Iceland, including hydropower plants, swimming pools, remote hot pots, and baptismal fonts while the second volume gathers thirty-six texts of

[1] Mimi Thompson, "Roni Horn by Mimi Thompson," *Bomb Magazine* 28, 1 July 1989, https://bombmagazine.org/articles/roni-horn/.

varying formats, from anecdotal sketches to essays to short stories, all composed by Horn during her time spent around and in these pooling waters. The title of the series *To Place*, preceded as it is by "to", figures "place" as a verb, suggesting that Horn is creating the place of Iceland through her own explorations of it, that the place's identity evolves alongside her own, her experience of the place and sense of self shift and become in tandem. Horn might be seeking to visualize that sense of "place" we occupy in sayings like "I'm in a better place now" or "he's not in a good place"—just as she comes to Iceland with her identity and affect in a "different place" each visit, so each set of relations with the island iterates a new instalment of the never-complete series. Through the series, Horn maintains her relationship to Iceland as an "active form rather than a definitive one" that allows her to keep at bay the "idea of naming things and identity in a way that [she] feel[s] more comfortable with."[2]

Horn seeks to bring awareness to the fact that her self is continually constituted in relation to other things. She also seeks to give the viewer such a mutually-constitutive experience of her art. Further, Horn does not separate modes of looking based on location; instead all her observations are united in her. Thus, an anecdote Horn heard in Iceland "about children's fear of opaque water" leads Horn to explore her own relationship to opaque water on a subsequent trip to London in 1999.[3] Visiting the city literally wound through with the dark water of the river Thames, she photographed the

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2 Horn interviewed by Hans Ulrich Obrist quoted in Roni Horn, *Roni Horn a.k.a. Roni Horn: Subject Index*, edited by Beth Huseman (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art; London: Tate Modern in association with Gottingen: Steidel, 2009): 147.

3 Louise Neri, "Survey: Roni Horn: To Fold," in *Roni Horn* (London: Phaidon, 2000): 68.

surface of the water. She annotated fifteen of these photographs and grouped them to create the work *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example)*. The photographs are annotated with her own thoughts and observations about the river's darkness in an effort to understand her own relation to the water and possibly grasp why children fear its darkness. Each of the fifteen photographs captures the surface of the river cropped to eliminate contextualizing objects such as the horizon line, birds, boats, or bridges. Although all were taken where the river runs through central London, the color, texture and pattern of waves and ripples, distortion of reflected light, and transparency of the water's surface varies in each photograph to such an extent that a viewer might believe they depict fifteen different bodies of water (compare figures 1 and 2). The diversity of the river's appearance in this sample of photographs reflects Horn's aversion to exclusivity or fixity in name or identity, "Identity is a river."[4]

As the viewer approaches any of the fifteen photos of *Still Water*, each a lithograph on paper 28 inches tall by 41 inches wide, they will first notice perhaps that the photograph is of the surface of an unspecified body of water. If they move closer, they might notice small bits of debris floating on the surface of the water (figure 3). Upon closer inspection, the specks are revealed to be superimposed numbers, which appear to be floating on the water's surface. As the viewer moves closer to read the numbers, they will see that the numbers correspond to a series of footnotes that run along the bottom of the photograph like a caption (figure 4). However, unlike a caption, the footnotes do not explain the content of the photo, nor do they cite a source for a pattern of ripples or the

4 Roni Horn quoted in *Roni Horn a.k.a. Roni Horn: Subject Index*, 147.

play of light on the water at a given point. Instead, they record thoughts Horn has and associations she makes as she looks at the points they mark on the water's stilled surface. As such, the footnotes record Horn's reactions to the river's color or texture, its ripples and what they resemble, and thoughts related to the river such as accounts of suicide in the Thames, references to poems by Emily Dickinson and Wallace Stevens, to films by Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Michelangelo Antonioni, to novels by Joseph Conrad and Mark Twain, to paintings by Claude Monet, to earworms stuck in her head as she looks at the water, and other tangents of thought such as desire and disgust at the idea of jumping into the murky water and musings on the nature of water and fluidity of identity. She poses questions to the viewer as well, inviting them to allow their mind to wander, to think about their own associations with water. The dispersed placement of the numbers gives the viewer room to explore the photograph, their eyes wander over the surface of the water, perhaps seeking the next number or perhaps meandering leisurely, perhaps noticing how some numbers are black and others white to stand out against the water's background (figure 5).

Arranged without evident rhyme or reason beyond the trail of Horn's own wandering gaze, the scattered annotations visually realize a wandering mode of viewing and—barring a viewer who seeks out consecutive numbers—undermine a restricted or singular experience of the photograph of water. Horn cultivates this sense of a work constantly becoming alongside or in tandem with the viewer's exploration of it, a sense she associates with her experience of Emily Dickinson's poetry: Dickinson is "a writer you could read again as if you had never read her before—somehow the work never

becomes familiar. There is no structure that you can latch onto, not that it's amorphous, but it is not something that you can identify or whose identity can be separated from the experience—you have to go into it, and it literally presents itself as if you are there with it."[5] In other words, because you are yourself different, and you constitute an experience of the work, you encounter the work anew with each interaction. Horn goes on to explain that she wants to offer a similar experience of reciprocal constitution to a viewer submerging themselves in *Still Water*.

Experiencing the series as records of Horn's own interaction with the photograph might make the viewer reflexively conscious of their own agency in constructing an experience of the photograph and figure this as a form of looking that combines open wandering with personal reflection, like the contemporary British psychogeographer does in their narratives. An encounter with Patrick Keiller's film *London* soon after seeing *Still Water* introduced me to this psychogeographic practice. *London* was released in 1994, five years before Horn began taking photographs of the Thames. It is composed of stationary camera shots of spaces in London overlaid with narration of two never-pictured characters' expeditions through those same spaces. The two main characters, Robinson and the narrator, go on walks that the former has planned to investigate "the problem of London." His investigation, which has evolved out of his research, involves seeking traces of the creative culture that surrounded the authors of eighteenth and nineteenth century Romantic literature in the landscape of contemporary London and its outlying areas over the course of one year, 1992. Robinson, a professor at the local

5 Roni Horn, *Subject Index*, 51-52.

University of Barking, teaches the works of a number of French writers and poets who found themselves exiled to London, including Mallarmé, Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine, Apollinaire, Charles Baudelaire, and Marcel Schwob, who translated Daniel Defoe, Thomas de Quincey, and Robert Louis Stevenson. After a period of time researching these men's writings and living a rather ascetic and isolated lifestyle, Robinson invites the narrator, his former lover, to accompany him on these expeditions on foot, urging him to "come as soon as possible, before it is too late." Along with excerpts from poetry and prose by the writers he studies, the narrator's own reflections and memories of their walks comprise the voiceover.

Their walks are disrupted a number of times, most notably by the aftermath of Irish Republican Army bombings, the Miner's Strike, and the election of conservative John Major as prime minister, the fourth consecutive conservative elected to the position. Major was successor to Margaret Thatcher's three terms as Prime Minister that were characterized by nationalistic rhetoric that advanced racist immigration policies and anti-trade union and homophobic legislation. The bombings and strike are demonstrations against the resulting oppressive atmosphere that resulted from these policies. Though his wanderings hopefully seek traces of the Romantic in the contemporary, Robinson's journeys cannot escape and are interrupted by the political realities that intervene and determine the circumstances for his everyday life.

Beyond the similar interweaving personal and cultural experience, Keiller's film resonates with Horn's photos in its inclusion of a series of shots of the surface of water that are morphologically similar to Horn's photos. The shots of water are some of the few

shots in the entire film not overlaid with narration or music. They instead include diegetic drip-dropping and burbling sounds, mimicking for the viewer an actual proximity to water. The points of view of the fixed shots compound this sense of perspective. They do not reveal the horizon line like most of the other shots in the film, but instead replicate the embodied point of view a person would assume looking at water: some are taken directly above the surface of the water, providing an overhead view as if looking directly off a bridge or boat into the river below or beside, while others are taken looking diagonally down at or across the surface of a river or lake, readable as such because of the oblong shape of the ripples from raindrops on the water's surface. In all the shots of water, like in Horn's photographs, contextualizing clues such as shorelines, embankments, or even trees or boats are notably absent. Filmed from what seems to be the point of view of a person gazing purposely at the water, perhaps taking a rest from walking and absorbing other sights, it is not hard to imagine these are meant to replicate Robinson or the narrator's views when walking along the river Thames or river Brent.

Furthermore, these shots punctuate the walks of the two characters. Unlike the interruption of the political events, the water shots occur at key moments that emphasize the particular psychogeographic project of the film. Patrick Keiller, the director, partook of psychogeographic expeditions not unlike Robinson and the narrator's when he was an architecture student in London, often returning to sites he had spotted from his bike or a train in order to capture them on camera and write about them. These shots appear to function as a point of entry for the viewer into the work's project analogous to that

offered by Horn's photographs: they invite the viewer to wander, to be open to chance illuminations, and to mull over the process of seeking history in the space of the present.

Not only are the series of photographs and set of shots of water morphologically similar, they seem to suggest a typologically similar mode of looking. Carlo Ginzburg argues morphological connections between objects or pieces of information can serve as a springboard for an historical project because vacillating between morphological detail and a greater historical narrative offers a more complete picture than either an investigation of microscopic detail or of telescopic proportion could alone. Ginzburg expands upon the advantages of his historiographical method: he "permit[s] [him]self to be guided by chance and curiosity, not by a conscious strategy" and, instead of ignoring morphological connections and privileging the historical, acknowledges how morphological analysis is instrumental to his own historical research.[6] Although I was drawn initially to connect Horn and Keiller's visual depictions of water, the friction of their morphological connection exposed further resonances the works share: references to texts to punctuate visual and spatial wanderings, their origin in 1990s London, and their dual deployment of text and image to achieve a mode of looking not unlike Ginzburg's excitation.

Yet another source has been instrumental to unpacking the type of slow looking suggested in these works, the novel *Austerlitz* by German expatriate writer W. G. Sebald, published in 2001. In *Austerlitz* as in his other prose fiction works, Sebald investigates

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6 Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, translated by John and Anne C. Tedeschi (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989): xii.

the overlapping themes of history, memory, space and place, walking, and looking. The story of *Austerlitz* consists of the several conversations between an unnamed narrator and the titular character, Jacques Austerlitz, a professor of capitalist architectural history at the Courtauld Institute in London, bracketed by the narrator's own travels. The conversations, taking place between their initial meeting in 1967 in the central train station in Antwerp and their final meetings in London in 1996, are recalled by the narrator from memory, and relayed without quotation marks and with little interjection from the narrator.

Over the course of their sporadic meetings during these almost thirty years, Austerlitz shares with the narrator his own simultaneous journey to recover and understand his past, obscured as it was by his own unconscious repression and upbringing as a refugee from World War II brought to England on a *Kindertransport*—a train ride part of a program of rescue efforts that evacuated children from areas of Nazi occupation—from central Europe. After a lifetime of suppression and avoidance, Austerlitz develops an inability to write caused, he believes, by his deliberate refusal to investigate his past. Hearing a story on the radio about another refugee who came to England on a *Kindertransport* from Prague, he journeys to the state archives there, finding information leading him to his childhood nanny, Vera, still alive in the city. Through photographs and stories, the two reconstruct Austerlitz's childhood, the reason for his evacuation, and the fate of his mother, who was sent to Theresienstadt, a concentration camp in a walled city.

Sebald is known for including elements in his works that confuse fiction with fact, such as eschewing quotation marks for dialogue typical of fiction, a wandering, history-ridden narrative, and obscure black and white photographs that obliquely relate to the narrative. Many of such black and white photographs are interspersed throughout the pages of *Austerlitz*. Without captions or other guiding cues, the reader is left to handle the images as they desire: they may linger on the photographs, seek out a stable connection between the image and the preceding or following text, or glance over them momentarily, as if they are a continuation of a sentence, a digression, or a piece of supporting evidence, before continuing the narrative. All of the photos make complete breaks in the text, sometimes taking up an entire page, and almost all of the photos interrupt sentences through the way they are inserted. Their formatting suggests they are not necessarily to be taken as pauses or completely ignored to be returned to later, but the terms of engagement are ultimately left to the reader.

The viewer of these three works is presented with instances that do not offer a single mode of engagement, but which beckon them to engage like a reader. Furthermore, if we take Horn at her word and consider the type of vacillating interaction deriving from the work's dual deployment of text and image, we might investigate the mode of looking engendered by *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example)* as a form of reading. According to Michel de Certeau's concept of reading as constitutive of something beyond what an author intends, it is apt for Horn to acknowledge the ever-unfamiliar nature of reading and re-reading. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau explains that a reader, in wandering through the "imposed system" of the text, does not adopt the

author's point of view nor do they author a text, instead a reader "invents in texts something different from what they 'intended.'"[7] Instead of replicating what the author created, the reader combines fragments of texts in the act of reading. In the space constituted by their interaction with the text, creating "something un-known" and unprecedented, reflecting their inherent "capacity for allowing an indefinite plurality of meanings."[8] This type of reading conceives of the text—not only words, but also a city, or a set of images, i.e. something to be read—as infinitely legible. Being untotalizable in nature, incommensurability is built into the act of reading. If a text can be read any number of ways, the act of reading and the reader's creation take on a character of ambiguity.

The type of reading proposed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick will be useful to discuss the ambiguity these works asks their readers to experience and sit with. In the chapter "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're so Paranoid You Probably Think This Essay is About You" of her book *Touching Feeling: Affect Pedagogy, Performativity*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explains how operating from an ambivalent position might be advantageous for projects that look both into the past and through the present to conceive of a different future in order to survive. [9] Paranoid reading is an affect theory that Sedgwick defines as a mode of selective scanning and amplification that risks being tautological by finding confirmation of its bias in whatever it reads and

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7 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988): 169.

8 Ibid, 169.

9 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're so Paranoid You Probably Think This Essay is About You," in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003): 123-151.

also involves a restrictive relation to temporality that understands time deterministically, as moving in one direction and thus a reader looks to the past for hints of how to protect itself from future violence, seeking safety and security at any and all costs. Further, paranoid reading is a negative affect in that it disavows its affective motive and masquerades any knowledge it attains and reveals as "truth."[10] According to Sedgwick, operating in this way can be referred to as operating from a paranoid position.

A position, as defined by Melanie Klein, is a set of practices involving to-and-fro movement of heterogeneous relational stances instead of remaining stuck within one rigid structure or ideology. In other words, instead of being a paranoid type or in a paranoid phase, one operates temporarily from this position.[11] Using Klein's definition of a position, Sedgwick argues that a reader is not "stuck" using one mode of reading the world, and should move between both paranoid reading and reparative reading in order to understand different ways knowledge is created and to ensure one does not equate truth value with the performative effect of exposure that occurs in paranoid readings. In other words, instead of subscribing to one way of viewing the world and discovering information, Sedgwick suggests that shifting among paranoid and reparative tactics of reading will allow one to distinguish information that sounds true because of its novelty or the surprise of its discovery from information that is actually new. Being open to different type of knowledge formation means being open to the frisson that

[10] Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading," 138.
[11] Ibid, 128.

psychogeographers seek to capture, that is, the knowledge that emerges from movement among text, images, and spaces.

Sedgwick claims that the reparative position has been characterized as aestheticizing, sappy, and reactionary due to the limitations of present theoretical vocabularies, not the reparative model itself, which is actually additive and accretive. Unlike a paranoid reading where a reader is constantly on alert to dangers posed by the incompleteness of parts, a reparative position is anxiety-mitigating, whereby a reader uses their own resources to repair or assemble part-objects into something whole. The reparative whole is assembled with an eye to provide pleasure and amelioration, which Sedgwick observes are often preceded by "mere," an inclusion which she frames as unnecessarily glorifying intolerable and painful—read, paranoid—processes of reading. Instead of framing them to expose or seeking in fragments what is troubling, the reparative reader recognizes the multiplicity of truths in part-objects they gather as joyful. What is gleaned through the reparative position can be incorporated into the reader, can be identified with, and can provide nourishment and comfort.[12]

The reparative position can also accommodate and enrich queer readings of culture, which Sedgwick defines as those readings that undo the lockstep of temporal inevitability that characterizes paranoid readings. As such, the reparative reader is open to surprise because, although the unexpected can be terrible, it can also possibly be good. A reparative position thus mobilizes hope as one method of organizing fragments, which although typically oriented towards the future, Sedgwick argues can be used to

[12] Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading," 128.

reparatively read the past from the present: "Because the reader has room to realize that the future may be different from the present, it is also possible for her to entertain such profoundly painful, profoundly relieving, ethically crucial possibilities as that the past, in turn, could have happened differently from the way it actually did."[13] Drawing on her theoretical argument and such queer experiences from her own life, Sedgwick insists on operating from a mutable position that allows interplay between paranoid and reparative practices to disturb the progressive narration of historical inevitability associated with paranoid readings and open up reading to include shared histories, emergent communities, and meanings kindled by intertextual discourse. Sedgwick concludes her essay arguing in favor of cultivating a vocabulary with which to discuss and prop up reparative positions. She suggests that the reparative, as it is connected to the project of survival, might teach us how "selves and communities succeed in extracting sustenance from the objects of a culture—even of a culture whose avowed desire has often been not to sustain them."[14]

Sedgwick contends that theoretical and critical writing at the time of this book's publication in 2003 mostly came from paranoia—not attached to neurosis or psychological diagnoses—as an imperative critical stance and that such a mode of cognitive/affective practice both raises the question of what knowledge *does* and also illuminates other cognitive/affective theoretical practices available.[15] By what knowledge does, Sedgwick means to ask how the grasping or seeking of knowledge is performative

[13] Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading," 146.
[14] Ibid, 150-1.
[15] Ibid, 124 and 126.

and how one can move among the causes and effects of this process. That is, the way in which one accesses or seeks out information influence that knowledge and how one uses it and acts with or in response to it.[16] Sedgwick implores us to see paranoid reading and reparative reading not as imperatives but as possible positions from which one can seek knowledge.

In order to more clearly specify the type of reciprocal constitution of "knowledge" and its emergence from the vacillation between text and image, I will compare a viewer's experience of Horn's *Still Water* to similar modes of viewing that the characters of Keiller's *London* and a reader of Sebald's *Austerlitz* take part in. Considering the works together will provide a more comprehensive and multiple way of conceiving of the generative potential of wandering than any taken alone. However, I am not using these other texts' words or modes of looking merely to elucidate an experience of *Still Water*, rather I hope that the friction generated by comparing the works might reveal a different type of reciprocal relationship extra to the work, a network of relations it benefits from, contributes to, and changes in its inclusion. In other words, although emanating from Horn's work, my methodology will involve talking around her piece to situate it among other conversations and, through this situation, change the conversations I situate it among. Like water whose volume adjusts to surround whatever is submerged in it, I hope to reveal through this discussion something of the way Horn's work ripples outward to inform looking in other related works and how these other works return the oscillation, effecting Horn's work and the act of looking at water in kind. In this effort to constellate

[16] Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading," 124.

it, Horn's work will slip under the surface and disappear from the discussion for some period of time. However, its disappearance below the immediate surface reflects its operation as a node in a network born of this type of reading that, like water, is an act of perpetual relation.

Psychogeography Surfaces

Psychogeography is the study of the influence an experience of space has on the mind, behavior, and emotions. While it is probably impossible to pinpoint the time that this interplay among physical and affective experiences of a space began affecting people's impression of spaces, the genre of writing seeking to record this interaction can be traced to the emergence of the *flâneur* in the writings of Charles Baudelaire, a nineteenth century French poet. Deriving from the French verb *flâner*, which translates to English as "to saunter," Baudelaire defined the *flâneur* as a person, typically a man, who strolled into "the heart of the multitude" to observe society and then withdrew to record his surroundings and created from them in his writings or art.[17] Both part of the crowd and apart from it, the *flâneur* occupied both the center and the periphery. The *flâneur* was attentive enough to notice the "types" he observed on the street and the changing of fashions moment to moment. Baudelaire used the work of Constantin Guys to exemplify the *flâneur*'s receptivity to each detail of the street, referring to him as "a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness," who "reproduc[es] the multiplicity of life" in his work (figure 6).[18] Guys' painting *Champs-Elysées*, with its flickering and ephemeral overlapping figures, conveys the vitality of the iconic boulevard in Paris, as if it were made "amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite."[19] The *flâneur*

[17] Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life, and Other Essays*, translated and edited by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1964): 9.
[18] Ibid, 5, 9.
[19] Ibid, 9.

filtered experience of urban life to reflect the dynamism and expansion of urban life occurring during the nineteenth century industrial boom.

Walter Benjamin, a German cultural theorist who dealt with themes of modernity in the first half of the twentieth century, later pointed out that the *flâneur* liked to occupy the new shopping arcades, train stations, and exhibition halls. These buildings constructed in the middle of nineteenth century all "serve transitory purposes."[20] The modern city, increasingly filled with such newly constructed buildings, was "the ideal backdrop for the flâneur," who vacillated between walking or wandering in transition spaces and writing in cafés or reading at home.[21] Benjamin's description of the *flâneur*'s haunts and habits aligns with Baudelaire's characterization of modernity as an inherently dual experience of "the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent which make up one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immutable."[22] The *flâneur* was defined by vacillation between polarities. He alternately submerged himself in the "river of life" and isolated himself to write.[23] He was jostled in the crowd, "a man who is already out of place," but yearned to immerse himself in the life of the streets.[24]

In *London*, Robinson's journeys reflect the duality of the *flâneur*: he embarks upon them after a period of extended self-isolation, only leaving his flat to go to the grocery store. The narrator comments upon the fact that Robinson used to be transformed

[20] [20] Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century: Exposé 1939" in *The Arcades Project*, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2002): 16.
[21] Benjamin, "Paris," 17.
[22] Baudelaire, *The Painter*, 13.
[23] Ibid, 11.
[24] Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" in *Illuminations* (Boston and New York: Mariner Books, 2019): 123.

into "an enthusiastic flaneur, astonishing his hosts with his stamina and generosity" when he traveled abroad, but no longer engages in *flânerie*.[25] If we take Baudelaire at his word that the *flâneur* feeds off the energy of those he observes and moves among, then Robinson's isolation would point toward a dip in the energy and enthusiasm on the streets of London, which might align with the poor conditions he observes. Throughout *London*, Robinson plays along the spectrum of immersion and distance that emerges in descriptions of the *flâneur*. At times he revels in the crowded marketplaces or street festivals and, at times of disappointment or perhaps physical ailment, he withdraws to his room for days on end and emerges "with the fresh eyes of the convalescent" to expose himself again to city life.

The practice of the flaneur is related to the later concept of "psychogeography," a term first used by Guy Debord in his "Theory of the Dérive."[26] Debord was a member and co-founder of the Situationist International, a group of artists, intellectuals, and theorists who enacted social revolutionary practices. The *dérive*, which translates into English as a "drift," was one of the actions they undertook to disturb the homogeneous experience of everyday life. The *dérive* was different from a typical stroll or walk; to drift one had to drop everything one was doing and simply walk, and "be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there."[27] Taking part in a *dérive*, one had to both let go of navigational plans and routines and also maintain awareness of the spaces—neighborhoods, microclimates, and other urban networks—they were pulled

[25] Keiller, Patrick, dir. *London*. 1992; London, UK: British Film Institute, 1994. DVD.
[26] Guy Debord, "Theory of the Dérive" translated by Ken Knabb, *Internationale Situationniste* #2 (December 1958), accessed April 1, 2019, https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/theory.html.
[27] Ibid.

to drift through. When one embarked on a *dérive* on foot throughout a city, "one [wa]s concentrating primarily on research for a psychogeographical urbanism."[28] Debord used the term "psychogeography" to describe emotive forcefields or ambiances that pervade a city's physical spaces that one could anticipate encountering while drifting. Drifting through various neighborhoods without abiding by routine revealed relations among ambiances usually hidden when one is tied to everyday routine. Situationists mapped out these psychogeographical observations and continued to add or amend their records with each *dérive*, using walking reparatively to create an expanded vision of Paris.

Although the situationists concept of the *dérive* figured the layman as empowered only when engaging in this revolutionary practice, anyone who observes people living and creating lives while existing in dominated situations will agree that the layman is never without agency or creative power. Michel de Certeau reveals the subversive system of tactics laymen, or as he refers to them, consumers, enact in everyday life in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. His writings offer a vocabulary through which it is possible to discuss how Robinson's walking exists at the juncture of French and British psychogeography as he walks and creates meaning among the systems of power of late capitalism. De Certeau acknowledges the consumer's agency, explaining the tactics he uses as a method of survival through movement and quick, tactical maneuvers. They consume, but deftly manipulate what they consume, using it against the disseminators' intention in subtle ways to create their own meaning. The consumer, often kept in his subordinate place by insufficient pay and leisure time, lacks the power to escape, but

[28] Debord, "Theory of the Dérive", 1958.

works from where he is stuck to make a space for creativity. For example, an assembly-line worker brings home leftover materials from the factory floor for his own use. These casual practices are small gestures of freedom and power within everyday life that create a space within a constricting system for "plurality and creativity."[29]

The tactics enacted by the consumer are not ossified or attached to one person, but are enacted in a relation to something, a gerund: embodying, acquiescing, and pressing against. Some examples of such tactics are the spontaneous adjustments a consumer might make to a recipe based on the food available while cooking, impulsive detours one might take on a commute home that reveal short-cuts, or the use of resources from one's place of work to one's own ends. De Certeau uses the example of the tactical dexterity of a taxi driver navigating the winding, congested, and poorly marked streets of Rome or Naples: a tactic is "a skill ceaselessly recreating opacities and ambiguities—spaces of darkness and trickery—in the universe of technocratic transparency, a skill that disappears into them and reappears again, taking no responsibility for the administration of a totality."[30] In this way, tactics multiply the ungraspable in life and allow a consumer to retain the shocking power to survive under oppressive totalities. All of these processes are not premeditated, but involve some knowledge and understanding acquired through experience and repetition, the same kind of knowledge one might acquire of the footpaths in a park from walking through it on the way to work, or the best time to catch a bus in order to find a free seat.

[29] De Certeau, *Everyday Life*, 97.
[30] Ibid, 18.

This type of unspoken knowledge comes to pervade and constitute the spaces of a city. Like the deployment of the *dérive* to explore the psychogeographic ambiances in urban space, de Certeau contends that footsteps of crowds layer in and give shape to urban space. Not only do the paths of single travelers collect in a place, but they work as an interconnected network to "weave places together" and constitute the space of city.[31]

Tactics empower a person when walking, gives them agency over their experience of a space when moving through it, and also when recounting or recording this experience. Further, de Certeau offers a vocabulary through which it is possible to discuss the psychogeographic practice of reassembling, creating, and sharing something tactical and novel from personal and experiential knowledge on the move.

Unlike the assertion of the revolutionary mobilization of walking by Debord and the situationists through the *dérive*, consumers' actions do not change the status quo. Instead, they figure the consumer as one who uses unspoken and experiential knowledge to create their own narrative out of the residue of their walks and their own personal history and research. In this sense, the consumer is more akin to British psychogeographers, such as Iain Sinclair or Will Self, whose walks do not affect the topography or political situation of London, but, through exploring, consuming, and reassembling personal, experiential, and historical knowledge, they create novel accounts of their walks and perhaps provide an example for a reader to embark upon meaningful strolls of their own.

[31] De Certeau, *Everyday Life*, 18.

As opposed to the politically revolutionary aims of French psychogeography, the tradition of psychogeography in Britain, as it crystallizes in the writing of Iain Sinclair, Patrick Keiller, and Wil Self, among others, is much more linked to excavation of historical sediment and returning historical and occult significance to sites peripheral to contemporary capitalism. Keiller's film follows a series of psychogeographic wanderings that participate in a strain of British psychogeography. Though labeled as such, the practice of psychogeography in Britain, as characterized by Will Self in a review of Patrick Keiller's collected writing, "isn't so much a field as the traversing of one."[32] Contemporary "psychogeography" is hard to define or sort into a single discipline, a characteristic it shares with the narratives that result from its practice, including the writings of Self, Keiller, and Iain Sinclair and others in 1990s London. Perhaps this has to do with the fact that psychogeography is more of a "conundrum" that, like an earworm, entices many, including Self in his aptly-named book, *Psychogeography: Disentangling the Modern Conundrum of Psyche and Place*, to understand "the manner in which the contemporary world warps the relationship between psyche and place."[33] That British investigations of this entanglement include permutations of the mediums of poetry, prose, film, and photography reflect its complexity: Self's book includes photographs and etchings, Sinclair's works combine poetry, prose, and photographs, and Keiller's works involve prose, photography, and film.

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[32] Will Self, "The Frisson," *London Review of Books Online*, Accessed 10 April 2019, https://www.lrb.co.uk/2014/01/20/will-self/the-frisson.
[33] Will Self, *Psychogeography: Disentangling the Modern Conundrum of Psyche and Place* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2007): 11.

Where French psychogeography came about as a movement to locate the self amid forces of commodity, British psychogeography reacts against the homogenization of urban experience caused by global technology and financial industries. They wander through city centers, unpeopled sites of former bustling nineteenth century capitalist activity, like the docks or shopping centers, and the peripheral spaces among newly-built office buildings, airports, and other nodes of international business, in order to reveal traces of history that remain there. They excavate historical traces to offer a sense of place that is rooted in its site, unlike the recently erected monuments to global capital, such as Canary Wharf. In "Walking is political", Will Self explains how British psychogeographers *use* these sites: "we understand that to walk the city and its environs is, in a very powerful sense, to use it. The contemporary flâneur is by nature and inclination a democratising force who seeks equality of access, freedom of movement and the dissolution of corporate and state control."[34] They use these sites by traversing them, emphasizing the spaces' accessibility with their humanity, albeit briefly.

Following in this vein, Patrick Keiller made *London* as a response to the financially-driven politics of the Tory-led government during late capitalism.[35] In the film, Keiller documents the *flâneur*-like explorations of riverside spaces and the City of London whose post-industrial desolation, emptied by the shunting of port culture south of London and global expansion of trade, is a symptom of late capitalism. Robinson is a near perfect example of the contemporary *flâneur*: teaching only two days a week, he is

[34] Will Self, "Walking is political", *The Guardian* online. 30 March 2012. Accessed 11 April 2019. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/mar/30/will-self-walking-cities-foot.
[35] Patrick Keiller, "London in the 1990s" in *The View from the Train: Cities and Other Landscapes* (Brooklyn, New York and London: Verso, 2013): 85 and 88.

essentially a man of leisure. He is an autodidact who reads the work of "a number of French writers who found themselves exiled" in London, whose works extolled the nineteenth century *flâneur*'s experience of urban space.[36] Robinson vacillates between exploring the streets and withdrawing to his apartment as his livelihood and the habitability of urban space is increasingly threatened by the Tory government.

Taking place over the course of 1992, the film follows on the heels of Margaret Thatcher's conservative and vitriolic government. Serving as Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990, she promoted a number of policy changes that, together, were labeled as "Thatcherism" and included slashing of welfare programs, deregulation of the financial sector, privatization of government-owned amenities, undermining trade and labor union power, and increased championing of British nationalism. The editing of the film emphasizes this government's effects on Londoners' deteriorating way of life when the characters' walks are repeatedly interrupted by the election of conservative member of Parliament John Major as Prime Minister, the Irish Republican Army's bombings of parks and banks to protest Britain's rule over Northern Ireland, and the Miners' Strike against multiple mine closures. For those not in the political majority or benefitting from tax cuts on the extremely wealthy, the social and political climate of 1992 was tumultuous and tense. Robinson claims the government is seeking to eradicate his ability to survive not only as an individual, but with the resources that make European cities—read, Paris—livable, such as well-kept, open public spaces, café culture, and public amenities: "London, [Robinson] says, is a city under siege from a suburban government

[36] Keiller, *London*, 1994.

which uses homelessness, pollution, crime and the most expensive and run-down public transport system of any metropolitan city in Europe as weapons against Londoners' lingering desire for the freedoms of city life."[37] Beyond this specific list of grievances, the climate might have a marked impact on Robinson for other, unspoken reasons. Given his reading habits and the state of the city, it is unclear whether melodrama or an actual disease is ailing Robinson when he asks the narrator to join him in London, "before it is too late," but he does make clear the ways his lifestyle will get much worse when they receive news of John Major's election at four in the morning on April tenth:

> Robinson began to consider what the result would mean for him. His flat would continue to deteriorate and his rent increase, he would be intimidated by vandalism and petty crime. The bus service would get worse. There would be more traffic and noise pollution and an increased risk of getting knocked down crossing the road. There would be more drunks pissing in the street when he looked out of the window and more children taking drugs on the stairs when he came home at night. His job would be at risk and subjected to interference, his income would decrease, he would drink more and less well, he would be ill more often, he would die sooner.[38]

The specific ways consecutive Tory governments will affect Robinson's livelihood through inconveniences to daily life caused by the poor public infrastructure are compounded by his concern for the parks and libraries, which are threatened when the government does not lose the election. It emerges that Robinson believes in the power of public space to facilitate robust engagement with and creation from one's surroundings.

However, such engagement is contrasted with Robinson's inclinations towards isolation. Lack of public space and crumbling infrastructure contribute to the exacerbated

[37] Keiller, *London*, 1994.
[38] Ibid.

alienation of city life and Robinson's dissociation from certain contemporary events that do not directly concern him, such as the Irish Republican Army's periodic bombing of sites in London.[39] As London has grown in population, welcoming immigrants from around the world, especially from India and Jamaica, people continue to go about their lives adjacent to others, and though among a more culturally and experientially diverse population, they remain completely divorced from their fellow pedestrians. The increase the narrator notes in "people sleeping out" from when he last visited London seven years before reflects further the socioeconomic distance between fellow citizens. These aspects of "the problem of London", in their orbit around a certain upended idea of public interaction and sociability, contain traces of what has been lost from within the bleak everyday reality of the city. Robinson devises his walks to unearth and investigate these very traces of utopian possibility within the current problematic city by returning to sites associated with the golden age of literature to which he is devoted. In this sense, *London* aligns with the psychogeographic tradition of seeking social revolution and creative freedom within the publicly manifested restrictions of a conservative government, but with their culmination in a narrative that combines multiple mediums to lay out the manner in which a viewer's experience of space is constituted by personal predilections, history, literature, and affect.

Robinson's practice aligns with British psychogeography's tramping around that adds the investigation of history of a place as a preliminary step or follow-up practice to

[39] "Again, having been away for such a long time, I found it strange how quickly these events are forgotten by the general public. When I asked him, Robinson could remember the mortar attack on Downing Street in Feb the year before, but not the 8 or so devices since. He seemed to have become conditioned to the idea that what was happening in Ireland did not have much to do with him." Ibid.

the experiences and observations of the walk itself. Additionally, and perhaps more significantly, British psychogeographic writing of the 1990s seeks to capture the physical and emotional sensations of moving through different spaces and the thoughts these sensations spur through combining multiple mediums. Expanding psychogeographic practice to include historical investigations, British psychogeography engages in a sort of excavation that includes in its practice recording a walk and the surrounding events and views: its books and essays often include photographs or drawings to record an experience of the walk. Iain Sinclair's practice of writing, exemplary of the British strain of psychogeography, emerged out of this impulse. He began writing when he moved to London at age nineteen: "very excited by the new rhythms around me," he wanted to record the difference between his provincial origins and his new urban lifestyle, "to get down some kind of account of that. [...] I wrote to try and be vivid, to try and get textures and details."[40] His books combine prose, poetry, photography, and etchings as a way to investigate the dark historical palimpsest of London, to dredge its depths for unexpected nuggets or surprising juxtapositions.

Sinclair uses walking as a way of being open. He cherishes a daily walk like a tonic that immediately changes the mind. He is very attuned to the direct effect of spaces he moves through on his thoughts: "To go somewhere new is to feel the brain is being remapped, in an interesting way."[41] Sinclair also values walking as a tool to access the histories of a place waylaid by late capitalism's severing of travel's historical connection

[40] James Campbell, "Iain Sinclair: 'I take a walk every morning. It's opening up your system to the world, charging your circuits to be able to write'." *The Guardian*. 1 Nov 2013. Accessed 1 April 2019. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/nov/01/iain-sinclair-interview

[41] Campbell, "'I take a walk every morning'", 2013.

to landscape through advancements in global shipping that empty the working river and clog the highway.[42] He undertook one of his most rebellious and outrageous projects in the late 1990s when he decided to walk the M25 London Orbital Motorway, a ring road built and opened by Thatcher in 1986 to facilitate commutes that circumscribes London's outer boroughs. Sinclair's investigation of the motorway involved researching the towns that it bypassed, over-passed, and cut through. Through his investigation, it emerged that these towns are connected not only by his itinerant tramps, but by other themes of occult history, psychotic trances, and other complexities of human relation to the landscape. In the book that resulted from his treks, he bemoans the Thames, "emptied of everything except landfill barges and cheerless pleasure craft, is a backdrop to computer-enhanced heritage and development scams."[43] One can hear in this an echo of Robinson's explanation to the narrator that most of the traffic on the Thames is now "rubbish on its way to landfill sites in Essex."[44] Both Sinclair and Robinson walk against the increasing uniformity of urban experience, seeking to uncover traces of their subjective histories in the contemporary city.

In an attempt to grasp the intricacies and details of a walk, Sinclair's writing incorporates his personal experience of the spaces he moves through, personal associations, historical research, emotional associations, the space's past interactions with historically significant figures, contemporary social and political commentary, satire, and more poetic writing. Through exploring the folders filled with research materials for the

[42] Iain Sinclair, *London Orbital: A Walk Around the M25* (London and New York: Granta Books, 2002): 10.
[43] Ibid, 10.
[44] Keiller, *London*, 1994.

books *London Orbital: A Walk Around the M25* (2002) and *Downriver, or, The Vessels of Wrath: A Narrative in Twelve Tales* (1993) in Sinclair's archive, his method emerges. In the folders are variously assembled informational pamphlets from churches and historic cemeteries, tickets to the Maritime museum and small house museums, scanned pages from books of literature and poetry key to the river Thames' mythology in popular culture, notes about occultists and their writings, research into former hospitals, excerpts from radio broadcast transcripts, photocopied agendas from transportation planning agencies, pages of typed notes for writing or talks that spin a web of hidden affinities among proper names, facts, and themes, and printouts of articles that mention the M25 orbital motorway, among countless other pages. Leafing through these folders of miscellaneous research materials, the only thing that becomes clear is that Sinclair's books literally incorporate a variety of sources from before, during, and after his walks. In fact, multiple tickets from the Greenwich National Maritime Museum and multiple pamphlets from Highgate Cemetery suggest it was not uncommon for Sinclair to revisit sites. Thus, the incomplete or inexhaustible nature of a site is built into the narratives of his wanderings.

During my time in Sinclair's archive, I came across a number of typed documents that appeared to be summaries or outlines of the research and themes that would structure his books and talks. In these thematic maps, Sinclair suggests the term "fugueur" as an alternative to the *flâneur*.[45] A fugue is a mental state in which a person loses awareness of

[45] "O(R)BITUARY TRANCES" in box 26, folder 5, Iain Sinclair Papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

their surroundings and identity and is often accompanied by flight from their usual environment associated with certain mental illnesses. Sinclair mentions the fugue in a thematic map he makes of the M25, a photocopy of another map of London where the M25 is boldly outlined and words are collaged over what one may assume are their corresponding sites (figure 7).[46] The fugue is also mentioned in a document that appears to be notes collected for a talk at the Ruskin School of Art.[47] He refers to the fugue in relation to Ian Hacking's book *Reflections on the Reality of Transient Mental Illnesses*, referring to the subjects as "Mad Travelers."[48] In the notes for the talk, titled "Madness & Art", he positions the fugue against the trance and alongside notes on the history of Joyce Green Hospital and the names of R. D. Laing, a Scottish psychiatrist, and other members of a group called Kingsley Hall that sought to utilize the trance as a way for people who suffer from psychosis to explore their internal chaos. Although it is impossible to draw any conclusions from this mind map, Sinclair was clearly playing with the term *fugueur* as replacement for the *flâneur*, building on this theory with historical research into sites surrounding the M25 and their historical avant-garde psychiatric practices.

Oddly enough, in her survey of Roni Horn's work, Louise Neri characterizes Horn's oeuvre as a genre in and of itself and compares the nature of this genre to the musical fugue. The fugue is a musical composition technique, explained by Glenn Gould as "an invitation to invent a form relevant to the idiosyncratic demands of the

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46 Unnamed Map of M25, in box 26, folder 5, Iain Sinclair Papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

47 Stapled document labelled "Madness & Art" in box 26, folder 5, Iain Sinclair Papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

48 Ibid.

composition; it is ever questing, ever examining itself and subjecting its established forms to review".[49] Given Gould's definition of the fugue technique as experimenting and adaptive, perhaps Sinclair means to suggest the fugueur as a way to incorporate the elusive and fugitive experiential knowledge encountered in his psychogeography into the psychogeographic figure *par excellence*.

Sinclair's writings convey another element that British writers bring to psychogeographic practice. That is, excavation of hidden history or covered-over traces of occult traditions beneath the everyday topography of London. In his thematic maps that weave together various sources, Sinclair includes personal accounts and anecdotes, poetry and literature, and proper names alongside historical research. In one such map, Sinclair juxtaposes themes, "POSSESSION AS DISPLACEMENT", books, "Aldous Huxley *Brave New World"*, and notations of actual occurrences, "Off-highway prostitution."[50] Furthermore, the topics of his books reveal his interest in the occult: in his earliest book, *Lud Heat*, published in 1975, Sinclair traces and explores through poetry and prose a system of invisible ley lines linking churches designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor in London; *White Chappel, Scarlet Tracings*, published in 1987, reveals similarly obscure connections between antiquarian book dealers in the east London borough of Whitechapel and the Jack the Ripper murders from the late nineteenth century.

[49] Louise Neri, "Survey" in *Roni Horn*, (London: Phaidon, 2000): 68.
[50] See figure 7.

Many sites in London are associated with dark or hidden subject matter, but perhaps none more so in the popular imagination than the River Thames, the city's dark, unpredictable heart. The tidal river, whose name derives from the Celtic word for dark water,[51] is notoriously murky and polluted. In the eighteenth century, the Port of London was the world's busiest trade port, accepting goods from all over the British Empire. As towns around the port expanded to provide for the robust trade industry, and flushing toilets and factories were introduced in the nineteenth century, sewage and industrial run-off emptied directly into the Thames. In 1856 the Lord Mayor's river pageants came to end, as the river was overcrowded with steamships and polluted. The "Great Stink" of 1858, during which the sun putrefied the polluted river so much as to empty the Houses of Parliament, prompted the government to enlist Sir Joseph Bazalgette to construct a new sewage system. Pollution reached a peak again in 1957 when the Natural History Museum declared the river too polluted to sustain life.[52] The tidal river also has a history of periodically flooding its banks and destroying homes and settlements in the Thames river valley, contributing to its deadly and unpredictable character, not to mention the number of bodies found in its waters, dead by murder and suicide.

The river's dark character has been recorded by writers and artists over the centuries in works that continue to influence accounts of the river and draw people to its banks today. In fact, photocopies of passages wherein characters comment upon the

[51] Duncan Haskell, "The etymology of river names" on *Canal & River Trust Waterfront*, online, 11 November 2015, accessed 19 April 2019, http://canalrivertrustwaterfront.org.uk/culture/the-etymology-of-river-names/.
[52] Sophie Hardach, "How the River Thames was brought back from the dead" *BBC Britain*, online, 12 November 2015, accessed 18 April 2019, http://www.bbc.com/earth/story/20151111-how-the-river-thames-was-brought-back-from-the-dead.

river's darkness from Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* appear in Sinclair's research folders for *Downriver*. Since much of its history can be investigated through dredging its cultural and historical depths, the river is a sort of opaque focal point around which investigations of the city ripple.

Robinson figures his psychogeographic practice in London as one that will allow him to similarly uncover systems or reveal things hidden to the inattentive viewer within the dark geopolitical climate of London: "Robinson believed that if he looked at it hard enough, he could cause the surface of the city to reveal to him the molecular basis of historical events, and in this way he hoped to see into the future."[53] This claim is bookended by the second and third shots of the surface of water. The second (figure 8), a shot out onto an unidentified surface of water stippled with small waves that we might assume is the Thames, comes just after the narrator reads aloud a poem by Rimbaud about the bridges over the river.[54] The shot of water comes after a series of short stationary shots of bridges, including boats, barges, and other craft moving along the river, laid over with a reading of the poem. It is then followed by an intertitle announcing the end of the first expedition. Positioned between the poem and the official end of the first expedition, the shot of water seems to offer the viewer room to process the poem and digest it against the pair's previous conversation lamenting the state of the river traffic.

[53] Keiller, *London*, 1994.
[54] From the narration: "Crystal gray skies, a strange pattern of bridges, these straight those arched, others descending or slanting at angles to the first, and these figures recurring in the other lighted circuits of the canal, but all so long and light that the banks loaded with domes sink and diminish. A few of these bridges are still encumbered by hovels, others support poles, signals, frail parapets, minor cores cross each other and slip away, ropes rise up the banks, one distinguishes a red jacket, perhaps other costumes and musical instruments; are these popular tunes, fragments of manorial concerts, remnants of public hymns? The water is gray and blue, wide as an arm of the sea, a white ray falling from the height of the sky destroys this comedy." Ibid.

Then, there is a cut to a shot of the city, its buildings a backdrop to the river, while the narrator explains Robinson's method of looking at the surface of the city, that reveals things not visible on its surface.[55] This is followed by an overhead shot of the swirling surface of what we might assume to be the river Thames (figure 9). Filmed as if looking down into water from a bridge or embankment, the point of view of the shot, even if not actually their exact point of view, at least closely recreates for the viewer what the pair sees as they contemplate this goal. Following as it does an explanation of Robinson's method, and taken from this point of view, might this shot not function as a way for the viewer to enter into the pair's expedition? And a way into their confidence in psychogeographic ways of knowing? I read a certain confidence in these alternative tactics of knowing into the fact that Robinson and the narrator traced their way back into London from Strawberry Hill along the river, but their reliance on the river for navigation was not mentioned. Unless a viewer is familiar with the geography of greater London, they would have to use a map to trace the route Robinson and the narrator walked to realize they followed the Thames back to London, knowing it runs through the city's center. That this navigation is not noted only emphasizes the Thames' centrality to the orientation of Londoners' lives and figures it as a locus of fugitive and unspoken forms of tactical knowledge. The shots of water are thus associated with not only Robinson's psychogeographic project, but also the type of invisible, ungraspable, and unspoken knowledge he reads to find.

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[55] "Robinson believed that if he looked at it hard enough, he could cause the surface of the city to reveal to him the molecular basis of historical events, and in this way he hoped to see into the future." Keiller, *London*, 1994.

Psychogeography works to uncover and make use of such unspoken tactical knowledge. The situationists moved among different ambiances to map the city's unacknowledged differences, creating mutable amalgamations of information not considered cartographically significant. De Certeau's consumer gleans a similarly elusive type of knowledge from his daily life and deploys it in his efforts to survive. A consumer's tactic takes an order by surprise, "a tactic boldly juxtaposes diverse elements in order suddenly to produce a flash shedding a different light on the language of a place and to strike the hearer. Cross-cuts, fragments, cracks and lucky hits in the framework of a system, consumers' ways of operating are the practical equivalents of wit."[56] Momentary as they are, the repercussions of these choices are temporary, leave behind no traces, and do not alter the status quo. Like Robinson seeking traces of the past in the present, psychogeography suggests the combination of past and present in a space without reducing one to the other, but in order to perhaps, like Robinson, see into the future. These startling juxtapositions of past and present may be like de Certeau's "wit" in that they share significance invisible or suppressed by those who control public space, bringing more meaning to a site in their friction than either alone might.

Robinson practices tactical moves as he walks through spaces of the city of London and beyond, assigning his own meaning to otherwise innocuous or insignificant places. He crafts his own topography of the London, making out of it something that serves him. Robinson designates sites as significant for reasons he does not totally explain. His dedications do not change the site physically or leave a mark, they are

[56] De Certeau, *Everyday Life*, 37-8.

temporary and in fact exist as monuments only in the moment of their declaration, and perhaps in his memory upon revisiting. Robinson inaugurates his first site on a walk before the official expeditions: as he is explaining his project to the narrator, he searches for a particular location, "the location of a memory."[57] Going off a "vivid recollection" of a site, Robinson seeks "a street of small factories backing onto a canal", but finds it no longer exists, so he "adopt[s] the neighborhood as a site for exercises in psychic landscaping, drifting, and free association."[58] Although there is not a shot of the surface of water here, the site borders a small pond and a walking trail, echoing the significance of open public spaces and water to Robinson's process.

The second monument dedication precedes the reading of Rimbaud's poem, and therefore also comes just before the second shot of water described earlier. As they walk along the river, Robinson explains that trash barges comprise most of the water traffic now. Deftly tying together the mundane transportation of waste and a sentimental dedication, Robinson makes his first monument: "Sometimes, he said, at Battersea reach, where trains that carry spent uranium cross the river at night, sometimes I see the whole city as a monument to Rimbaud."[59] Thus, Robinson redeems the river and its vacant and post-industrial wastelands as a romantic site that contributes to his expedition and fits them into the map of his experience of the city.

Between expeditions, while he is visiting Brixton Market often, and the two are wandering around London, the narrator remarks on the fact that Canary Wharf (figure

[57] Keiller, *London*, 1994.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.

10)—the massive new office development on the Isle of Dogs whose docklands were the site of bustling trade activity in the nineteenth century—was just transferred to government administration with one and a half billion pounds in debt.[60] Until its failure, Robinson had avoided the project, but, embracing its failure, "he decided to adopt it as a monument to Rimbaud as a memory of his wanderings in the London docks."[61] A shot of the hulking, anonymous monolith of Canary Wharf is followed by the fifth shot of the surface of water (figure 11), providing the viewer with a moment to revel in the re-inauguration of this empty late-capitalist site as a monument to a romantic writer. Despite the fact that Canary Wharf is a symptom of Thatcherite free-market capitalism, Robinson is able to refigure a negative site with a positive connotation. Holding onto the monument, it might operate as a salve against the pageantry of the following scene when the Queen attends the opening of an electric substation in Leicester Square and they hear that someone had yelled "Pay your taxes, you scum!" at the monarch.

In the City of London, the financial center, during the second expedition, Robinson "declared Cannon Street a sacred site and the number 15 a sacred bus route" because of their proximity to the last remaining fragment of the London Stone, which is encased in the wall of the oversea Chinese banking corporation. Though a centuries old landmark, its origins are much debated; Robinson ascribes occult meaning to it, claiming it is the vessel on which a magician flew to Ludgate Hill and was part of a circle of stones that stood on the site of St. Paul's Cathedral. His benediction is followed by a number of

[60] Steven Prokesch, "Olympia Files Bankruptcy Plan for Huge London Office Project," *The New York Times*, 28 May 1992. Accessed 18 April 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/1992/05/28/business/olympia-files-bankruptcy-plan-for-huge-london-office-project.html.
[61] Keiller, *London*, 1994.

shots of the City of London, including one of Fleet Street, another two shots of the base of a monument, and then the sixth shot of water, all overlaid with Beethoven's plaintive String Quartet No. 15.[62] The music fades out to faint sounds of water sloshing and splashing during the brief shot of murky water taken directly overhead, with some sparkles of reflected light. The narration then moves on, to recount the economic slump resulting from the withdrawal of the pound from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism and comment on the geography of the City. Punctuating the inauguration of these sites, the shots of water might be read as emphasizing of Robinson's ritual of reading personal meaning into public sites as integral to his psychogeographic practice.

In assigning meaning to these sites, Robinson uses something similar to de Certeau's tactic of narration whereby a consumer creates fictional space through the act of telling a story and moving away from the real. Stories that begin with "once upon a time…" escape present circumstances while still operating within them: the storyteller performs "a balancing act in which the circumstances (place, time) and the speaker himself participate," through the narration.[63] Narration is a tactic in that it is "a way of knowing how to manipulate, dispose, and 'place' a saying by altering a set"; in other words, narration is a tactical form of knowledge that allows the storyteller to create a

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[62] Significantly, Beethoven wrote this four-act piece, the third act of which scores many scenes in *London*, after he had been ill for a long time and almost died. He did not think he would recover again and was suffering from alienation from his loss of hearing but was able to recover his health enough to continue writing music. As such, the third act is titled, *Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der Lydischen Tonart*, which translates into English as "Holy song of thanksgiving of a convalescent to the deity in the Lydian mode."

[63] De Certeau, *Everyday Life*, 79.

space for something new to exist that others may not recognize alongside the familiar.[64] To narrate, one takes "a detour by way of a past [...] made in order to take advantage of an occasion and to modify an equilibrium by taking it by surprise. It is a discourse characterized more by a way of *exercising itself* than by the thing it indicates."[65] Robinson exercises this tactical power when he consecrates loci of capitalism and small respites within the financial heart of London with the profound and enduring significance terms like "sacred" or "monument" connote. Robinson's surprising juxtapositions of personal research, historical associations, and public space communicate the sites' significance to the viewer more than if he were to mark out the space.

Furthermore, because the narrator includes their origin at Robinson's apartment and the route taken to each of these sites, including bus numbers, underground stations, landmarks passed, and bridges and streets traversed, the narrative and thus their actions remain in context. Instead of simply assembling sites as pieces of evidence of Romanticism, "cut-out" and "turned over," isolated and re-presented out of context to illuminate a theory or sustain a discourse Robinson has about the city, the narrator does not move beyond the space of the everyday in his narration, as in "once upon a time…" but, remaining in the everyday, the pair does "make a *coup*" in their uncovering of and acknowledging the layers of the past that form the palimpsest of London.[66] The contextualizing filmic sequence of shots is key, the literal sequence makes the viewer notice the conceptual and theoretical muddiness that they can access or point to through

[64] De Certeau, *Everyday Life*, 79.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid, 62-62 and 79.

narration and that Robinson's ritual gestures to. Operating in this way, Robinson shifts between paranoid reading in seeking traces of the past and also reparative reading in recombining and building to create an alternative topography, reveling in the murky of experience instead of seeking to clarify and reduce. Vacillating between extremes of isolation from and immersion in public space, Robinson's psychogeographic practice depends on a balance as precarious as the existence of his monuments.

Through these momentary monuments, Robinson "constitutes the *implantation of memory in a place* that already forms an ensemble."[67] De Certeau explains that memory fragments are mobilized tactically only "relative to what happens"; by taking an opportunity and cleverly transforming a situation that excludes or dominates it, "It inserts itself into something encountered by chance, on the other's ground."[68] Although this implantation takes only a moment, it is not a weak or insufficient gesture, but is a finessed gesture that "calls for a tightrope-walker's talent and a sense of tactics; it is the instant of art."[69] Through these precarious acts, Robinson is able to stake out *his* London, a concept of the city that he knows exists, that he goes out seeking traces of "in what he thought might be the last months of his life" despite the political climate that threatens his livelihood. While he may be understood as operating from a purely paranoid position, Robinson's accompaniment by the narrator give his actions communal weight, and the affective shifts that accompany them suggest his monuments emerge from a mutable position. In exploring the topography of the contemporary city for himself, Robinson

[67] De Certeau, *Everyday Life*, 86.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.

mobilizes memory and personal references to create "an unstable makeshift harmony" punctuated by shots of water.[70] The recurrence of the watery refrain whose subject winds London together after each dedication suggests that, perhaps, this ritual dedication is as integral to psychogeography as the river is to the city. That the shots are part of their psychogeographic narrative of London suggests the siting of their project in and its inextricability from their specific context.

That Robinson's psychogeographic practice creates as an unstable makeshift harmony aligns with psychogeography's vacillation between movement and stillness that results in an ambivalence of meaning. Deriving from the combination of immersion in public space and retreat to private studies, the monuments are the imposition of Robinson's research onto the space of London. The situation of the fourth shot of water emphasizes this interplay. It comes after the narrator explains that Robinson is trying to reconcile the election of John Major with his view of the world as inevitably progressing. Reacting to this upset, Robinson broods for weeks over the election in his room, but upon venturing out again to Leicester Square, he regales the narrator with his theories of Laurence Sterne's invention of cinema, spurred by a bust of Sterne in the square. The two then continue to wander among crowded streets all day, the narrator commenting on Robinson's enthusiasm for crowds.

Seemingly emphasizing affect's inextricability from experiences of place in *London*, many of the characters' most affective moments are punctuated by shots of the surface of water. Robinson has renewed enthusiasm walking down Ridley Road market:

[70] Keiller, *London*, 1994; de Certeau, *Everyday Life*, 86.

"As we wandered through the market, he became happier and relaxed and began to talk more positively about London's future." This affective moment is interrupted by the seventh shot of water (figure 12), during which the narrator responds to Robinson's hope with a lack of conviction: "London has always struck me as a city full of interesting people most of whom like Robinson would prefer to be elsewhere." A sort of self-conscious jab at the perceived futility of their strolls, as if undermining previous shots of water which had punctuated the dedication of monuments to Robinson's cause.[71] Later during that outing, Robinson is devastated to find the writing place of *Robinson Crusoe* instead of Poe's school and takes weeks to recover before venturing out again. His affect can also change abruptly, as when he must be restrained from lashing out against the pageantry of the City government on Fleet Street and then is contemplative and withdrawn immediately after, in a portico.

Throughout his walks, Robinson's feelings towards the city and its spaces vacillate widely, from enthusiasm to uncover traces of ideas he is studying to defensive bracing against the harsh realities of Tory politics. Throughout the film, Robinson and the narrator's location is connected in the same breath to their affective reactions to it. The two are inextricable. In fact, one influences the other. And when they realize their affective distance from the announcement of election results at 4AM in Smith Square, they are shocked: "It is difficult to recall the shock with which we realized our alienation from the events that were taking place in front of us. Robinson's first reaction was one of spleen." The reaction of spleen the narrator refers to is probably that explained by

[71] See figures 8 and 9.

Benjamin in his "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire": "In the *spleen*, time becomes palpable; the minutes cover a man like snowflakes. [...] The *spleen*, on the other hand, exposes the passing moment in all its nakedness. To his horror, the melancholy man sees the earth revert to a mere state of nature. No breath of prehistory surrounds it: there is no aura."[72] That Robinson reacts with spleen reveals how deeply his experience in Smith Square disturbs his concept of how the world ought to work. In the following weeks he broods over the election, "Robinson is a materialist, his vision of the universe that of Lucretius. [He was] unable to reconcile the reelection of the government with his understanding of nature."[73] This line is followed by a shot of water from above, relatively placid, but with occasional ripples from drops, birds chirping, and the bottom of the pond visible through the surface (figure 13). Coming after the narrator remarks that Robinson had a hard time reconciling the recent reelection of the conservative and oppressive government with his understanding of nature, this fourth shot of water offers space to visualize this paradox: despite the fact that Robinson believes he understands the nature of the universe, or can clearly see past its surface, the events of the world fail to align with it and cannot be anticipated, perhaps like the scattered drops of water continuously falling onto the surface of the pond. Keiller's use of the surface is connected to the ambiguous knowledge accessible through exploration of everyday space as explained by de Certeau: "Escaping

[72] Benjamin, "Motifs", 138.
[73] Lucretius outlined the Epicurean world-view in *De Rerum Natura* (*On the Nature of the Universe*), which through sharing his complete understanding of the origin and structure of the universe, he hoped would free humanity from needless cares and anxieties. Robinson's reaction to the election and general withdrawal from social and public life before the narrator joined him can also be understood as operating under the Epicurean position that sees philosophy as a refuge from anxiety and turmoil of contemporary life. Keiller, *London*, 1994.

the imaginary totalizations produced by the eye, the everyday has a certain strangeness that does not surface, or whose surface is only its upper limit, outlining itself against the visible."[74] Because psychogeography's arena is the everyday, it deals with a type of experience not always graspable or communicable, that can be suggested through written and visual records of interactions with urban space that are understood as incomplete, only able to hint at a sensation through what is shown. Read in this way, the water shot offers a space to process and possibly visualize the ambiguous revelations of their wanderings. Punctuating salient moments of their walks, the shots of the surface of water emphasize Keiller's psychogeographic practice that seeks affective and utopian traces in the topography of contemporary London.

Included in the topography of contemporary London are empty spaces of late capitalism that psychogeographers intently explore. Iain Sinclair walks the M25 "in the belief that this nowhere, this edge, is the place that will offer fresh narratives."[75] Will Self walks from London to New York, documenting his time traversing the alienating twenty-six mile stretch from his home in south London and Heathrow Airport and the twenty miles from John F. Kennedy airport to Manhattan in his book, *Psychogeography*. Patrick Keiller spills much ink on his explorations of peripheral spaces in London, but his essay "Imaging" distills his impetus to seek out these spaces observed from the windows of passing trains, or on the way to somewhere else.[76] Keiller describes revisiting on bike a site he saw while riding a train in order to photograph it. He compares his impulse to

[74] De Certeau, *Everyday Life*, 93.
[75] Sinclair, *London Orbital*, 14.
[76] Patrick Keiller, "Imaging" in *The View from the Train: Cities and Other Landscapes* (Brooklyn, New York and London: Verso): 173-87.

photograph the site to the transformative "Surrealist frisson" of looking and experiencing city space exposed by André Breton and his lover Nadja: they "convert everything we have experienced on mournful railway journeys [...], on godforsaken Sunday afternoons in the proletarian quarter of great cities, in the first glance through the rain-blurred window of a new apartment, into revolutionary experience, if not action. They bring the immense forces of 'atmosphere' concealed in these things to the point of explosion."[77] Keiller goes on to triangulate the impulse by comparing it to Christopher Phillips' photogénie—"'the mysterious transformation that occurs when everyday objects are revealed, as if anew, in a photograph or on the motion picture screen'"[78]—and to the contemporary psychogeographic impulse, "the now-commonplace presence of everyday objects in art, and in the subjective transformation, radical or otherwise, of everyday surroundings, the most familiar manifestations of which are the various practices of urban exploration that have been so widely established, especially in London, since the early 1990s."[79] Keiller explains that his own artistic practice, which combines narration and film, derived out of a dissatisfaction with the ability of photographs to properly communicate his momentary experience or sense of a place that shocks and yet is communicable in its everydayness to the viewer.

Keiller brings up the compelling possibility that the juxtaposition of image and text may be able to communicate a Lefebvrian moment, characterized as an intense

[77] Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia," quoted in Patrick Keiller, *The View from the Train: Cities and Other Landscapes* (Brooklyn, New York and London: Verso, 2013) 180.
[78] Christopher Phillips, *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings 1913-1940*, quoted in Keiller, *The View*, 2013: 181.
[79] Keiller, *The View*, 181.

instant that, “On the one hand, [...] affix the chain of equivalents to lived experience and daily life. On the other, they detach and shatter it.”[80] Keiller’s essay offers an example of a situation in which the impulse to document a moment on film (and the attendant incommensurability of communicating such a structure of feeling through visual media alone) is connected to the feeling of knowing a place impulsively in passing sight and in physical experience. That his explorations of the outskirts of London gave him an opportunity to communicate this impulse and also provide an example of such an impulse speaks to the connection between the decentering of 1990s psychogeography, its engagement with the periphery and the untotalizable nature of experience of space it seeks to capture and communicate.

After countless walks in the dead center of the City of London, Robinson is discouraged by his inability to find traces of modernity. The pair decamps to the outskirts of London, seeking in its suburbs, its borderscapes, and the places in-between the sites: “He said that London was now a city of fragments that were no longer organized around the center and if we were to find modernity anywhere it would be in the suburbs. And so it was that we return to the valley of the river Brent.” Robinson is enthusiastic, imagining encountering new artistic forms on their journeys. The narrator’s account of Robinson’s optimism setting out on this journey is followed by a shot of a placid surface of water, perhaps a pond or a section of the River Brent, that reflects trees above, overlaid with sounds of a few plinking drops and the chirping of birds. Over the next couple of days, they work their way from the suburbs in northwest London back to

[80] Henri Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday Life*, Volume 3, quoted in Keiller, *The View*, 185.

the city center, running into the Peruvian musicians they met on their first expedition on the way back. After they return to London and this third expedition ends, they attend a number of protests against mining pit closures. Clearly not sated, they set out again a few days later, this time to explore the landscapes surrounding Heathrow airport in southwest London. Shots of this walk have virtually no narration, and merely include diegetic sounds of airplanes flying low, cars passing, and machinery operating, as if the ungraspable nature of these peripheral spaces cannot even be approached in narration.

Psychogeographers are readers. Psychogeographers' subversion of "typical" forms of engagement with space, namely walking in places where driving or public transportation dominate, figure them as readers in de Certeau's terms. They read the spaces of a city, their footsteps traversing its streets like eyes scanning a page, for their own narrative, creating something new and not intended. Although this may sound like a paranoid form of reading, seeking what to include in their narrative, they build the narrative reparatively. They do not use their narrative to come to any concrete, definite conclusions, but instead as an example of additive creation for the reader so they may similarly explore a city space. Reading the "text" of London, Robinson dissembles and recombines fragments through his expeditions, creating "something un-known in the space organized by their capacity for allowing an indefinite plurality of meanings."[81] Not only is Robinson a narrator of deft comparisons, his sites are linked through the pair's wanderings through the city. Their walks compose a web of sorts, a structure that incorporates dispersion but does not reduce or totalize.

[81] De Certeau, *Everyday Life,* 169.

Looking at and in *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example)*

The tenets of psychogeography might be useful as we approach a description of the type of looking Roni Horn's *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example)* engenders. Horn incorporates varied sources into her series of photographs. In the text of the footnotes, their numbers scattered across the surface of the water, Horn includes observations of the texture and color of the water, "Is this khaki or beige?", "Is this beige or ochre?", "Is this ochre or yellow?"[82] or "See aerial view of the Rocky Mountains. (See especially the Canadian Rockies.)"[83]; lines from songs about rivers by Bruce Springsteen and Neil Young[84]; lines excerpted from poems by Emily Dickinson, Wallace Stevens; quotes from fiction by Edgar Allan Poe, William Faulkner; references to films directed by Michelangelo Antonioni, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; she shares accounts of bodies found in the river dead by murder or suicide that she heard of by word of mouth or from the news, dictionary definitions of water, and her own swirling thoughts and musings on the nature of dark water and the element's figurative and literal slipperiness. Horn also includes questions addressed to the viewer about their own reaction, their level of engagement with the work, and their thoughts about how she chooses to place the footnotes: "Are you thinking of Claude Monet, too?" "What about this footnote? Do you like it? I could have moved it over an inch or two but that might have changed its content." "Are you following the footnotes in their proper order, or are you just picking

[82] Roni Horn, *Still Water* (Santa Fe: SITE, 2000): 7.2-4. Pages are unnumbered, but plates of the work in the book are, so footnotes from the book are cited with plate number and footnote number, in the format "plate.footnote" so that footnote 10 on plate 12 is 12.10. And the book is specified in footnote citations, so as not to confuse with the work itself.
[83] Ibid, 9.17.
[84] Ibid, 9.4-6 and 2.6-7.

out the ones you like?"[85] There are even footnotes to other footnotes within the text of the footnotes: "The Thames is black water.[22]", "(Roiled and real.)"[86] More directly than in most psychogeographic writing, Horn locates multiple references that contribute to, complement, and constitute her visual experience of the surface of the Thames.

Horn's work, combining as it does multiple sources based upon and woven into the Thames' history, figures the river almost as John Burns did in 1929, as "liquid history." Her footnotes also dredge up the history of Horn's own individuality: the music, writings, and films that constitute her own frame of reference. In this way, we might read her choices to include the sources she chose as a reflection of the network of sources that constitute her internal discourse. As such, she might, through including her own personal references, set them out as an example for the viewer to not hold back from bringing what they will to the photographs. Including her own thoughts as she does suspended among those references to more universally acknowledged cultural references to the Thames, she might suggest to the reader any reactions they have are viable and worth plotting in the network of their own interaction, like British psychogeographers' inclusion of personal anecdotes in narratives of their experiences of city space.

Horn also sifts through the literary palimpsest of the Thames, particularly in her references to Joseph Conrad and Charles Dickens, whose writings, as we saw above, contributed to the Thames' mythology that endures today. Through her references to American writers such as Emily Dickinson, Wallace Stevens, and Flannery O'Connor,

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85 Horn, *Still Water*, book, 6.21 and 4.25-26.
86 Ibid, 11.21 and 22.

musicians such as Jimi Hendrix and Aretha Franklin, and films unrelated to London such as *Psycho* and *In a Year of Thirteen Moons*, she adds her own layers to the Thames' discursive sediment while sifting through the palimpsest of her mind. Her accounts of the corpses, body parts, and debris found in the river delve into what might lie in the riverbed's silty layers: legs, heads, and organs are found in the river, one man weighed himself down with thirty-two pounds of loose change, another strapped himself to his bike, and a young woman drove her yellow Ford Fiesta into the churning waters. Sewage and heavy metals, though historical pollutants, remain in lesser amounts to this day.[87] Horn also poses questions to viewers about the timeline of their own interaction with the work, how far along in the footnotes they are, whether the one they are reading is on the first photograph they encountered, or how much longer they will stay: "Are you paying attention to the numbers? Maybe you won't read all these footnotes. You'll probably get tired and walk away. (But there are more—more pictures, more footnotes: behind you or down the hall or in another room.)"[88] In this way, the experience of *Still Water* unfolds over historical and recent time, all the while the photographs still depict the Thames of 1999.

As was the case for Sinclair, Conrad and Dickens, and the original settlers of London, the darkness of the Thames draws many to its banks. Like the psychogeographers who set out on day-long journeys to uncover hidden nuggets, a viewer of Horn's work, and Horn herself, seek to reveal something hidden through

[87] "Sometimes I look at the water and even though I know it's probably just glistening on the surface, the river looks like it's coated in a colorful metal, perhaps cadmium or silver." Horn, *Still Water,* book, 8.3.
[88] Ibid, 12.24.

looking. Born of an impulse to understand why children fear opaque water, Horn later described the work as seeking the consequences of water losing its relationship to light. Described thus, the work's origin approximates an abstracted summary of Robinson's impetus to go on his walks through London—to explore how the city had lost its relationship to its Romantic past, which Robinson sees as a period of creative and generative energy, or light. [89] Though probably an unpopular comparison, research can be read as a sort of occult undertaking: if we consider the occult the study of information hidden to the layperson that, when learned, offers a new—sometimes clearer, sometimes more opaque—view of the world, then we might compare the research done by Horn and Robinson before they set out on their walks to Sinclair's research of more clearly occult traditions, such as ley lines.[90]

The impenetrable darkness of the Thames, though captured in Horn's photographs, remains an ungraspable mystery. Its darkness is apparent not only in the opacity of the water in each photograph, the volume of suicides and murder victims found in its waters, but also in the simultaneous draw and disgust Horn feels for the dark water. Though the sight of it often gives a viewer the chills and makes them thankful to be on land, because of the morbid depths of the mind which the mystery in darkness

[89] Neri, "Survey", 68.
[90] Ley lines are invisible lines drawn on a map or isometric drawing that connect places. First theorized by Alfred Watkins, an amateur archaeologist who derived the theory from connecting places of geographical and historical interest such as henges, ridge-tops, and fords. He suggested certain tracks, which he called leys, were used for ease of overland travel without navigational instruments in neolithic times. Later concepts of ley lines suggest they constitute energetic connections that are noticeable through remarkable activity that occurs along the lines.

conjures, there is also the lure to be inside of it or at least to muse at what might lie beneath its surface, obscured by darkness or murkiness. Immersion and isolation.

Horn comments on the fact that the Thames' darkness made itself psychologically apparent to her when she was photographing it: "its darkness was quite real."[91] She muses that perhaps the darkness pulls us because it might reflect something deeper about "the human condition", about "humanity's relationship to water", so that "even in its darkness, it has this picturesque element."[92] Almost like dragging the river for bodies, instead of merely scanning the surface for revelations of its murky depths, Horn questions what darkness itself might be, what black water *is*, and what it makes one feel. Instead of merely remarking upon its darkness, Horn questions it: "What is the darkness in the Thames? [41] Is it London? [43]" The treacherous tides hidden in the Thames' depths are part of what make its surface so illegible. Horn says you can sense "the complexity, the threat, the difference" from the shore, and it attracts you but also constitutes its darkness.[93] That you cannot see these undercurrents, cannot affirm them, but can sense them seems to play into the intangible nature of the darkness. Talking about the spots of reflected light that twinkle on the surface, Horn says she "imagine[s] the darkness that surrounds them—an unknown universe—and just a few feet from my grasp."[94] Darkness is another way to figure that just out of grasp. Leaving her queries unanswered for the viewer, more questions than answers surface from the Thames' murky depths.

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[91] "Water: Roni Horn." Interview by Art21, 2005. https://art21.org/read/roni-horn-water/.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Horn, *Still Water,* book, 1.7.
[94] Ibid, 3.38.

Horn uses darkness to subvert the mirroring nature of water and throws the viewer off their routine of looking, hinting at the unusual mode of looking her work provides. In one footnote she asks the viewer, "What is the darkness in the Thames? Is it you?"[95] When we look out over water, we might pause to contemplate, and figuratively reflect on ourselves. Or, when we look down into water, we might search for our literal, albeit probably somewhat distorted, physical reflection. Despite the fact that Horn's photographs of water and even the shots of water in *London* replicate an experience of looking down into or out over water, they do not replicate for the viewer the reflective element of water. Though its mirror-like quality is often disturbed in rivers, we are not given this opportunity to see ourselves reflected, to find ourselves in the work and, thereby, paranoidly affirm our own existence. Rather, Horn acknowledges and subverts our expectations, posing the question: "(When you see your reflection in water, do you recognize the water in you?)"[96] Instead of seeing aspects of ourselves distortedly reflected back to us in water, Horn invites us to see aspects of water that may be distorted in ourselves. To look at ourselves as a reflection of water might be to see distorted in ourselves water's multiplicity of forms, its fluidity, its depths, its mutable nature. In this sense, Horn is substituting for a paranoid impulse of reading a reparative one, whereby we might add to our own conception of ourselves from our explorations of the nature of water. By subverting our expected encounter with the surface of water, Horn alerts us to

95 Horn, *Still Water,* book, 7.34.
96 Ibid, 2.36.

another possible interaction with water, another aspect of its reflective property, that we might remember the next time we scan its flowing surface.

As Horn does not dictate what it is about water that we reflect, it is up to the viewer to read into this invitation. This is not the only choice Horn leaves up to the viewer, as the multiply dispersed structure of *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example)* leaves them to choose how to read through the work themselves. In scanning the surface of the water, choosing footnotes to read, and choosing which of the fifteen images to investigate, a viewer constructs their own map of interaction that includes their own sites of significance. Further, when Horn addresses questions to the viewer, they are left unanswered for the viewer to answer as they please, or, when the same question is asked over and over again, sometimes Horn herself offers different answers, building multiplicity into the work:

> [1] Remember *Psycho*?[4]— remember the sound of the windshield wipers? (Maybe it was the violins.) It had this kind of insistence—this prophetic insistence—river water's got it, too, especially at night. And that insistence doesn't have to stop, the way rivers don't. In fact, those violins don't stop. They keep going, on and on, in my head. Do rivers ever really end?
> [2] Do rivers ever really end? Even while you stand here and watch the Thames flow itself into the North Sea, does it end there?
> [3] Do rivers ever really end? You know they just keep going, keep going with another name.[97]

As she defers to the reader and offers multiple answers, the questions, like water, might lubricate the viewer's mind into thought and association. Whether they respond with an answer or ask more questions, the viewer moves through the space of the work constructed by Horn, led by the choices they make and the direction of their train of

[97] Horn, *Still Water,* book, 12.1-3.

thought, like the psychogeographer who traverses city space according to their own whims.

This freedom of engagement and drifting mode of viewing Horn encourages is compounded by the work's dispersed installation. There is no predetermined sequence of encounter, perhaps unlike other works installed in the same gallery or building:

> [24] Here you are at footnote 24, and even though there's no real beginning to this installation you must have started somewhere. It's possible you started here, at footnote 24. That means you'll have to go on awhile longer and then you'll know what I'm talking about.
> [25] What about this footnote? Do you like it? I could have changed its content.
> [26] Are you following the footnotes in their proper order, or are you just picking out the ones you like?[98]

Horn's content does not exclude or demand, it encourages wandering and questioning; there is no required progression, no need to follow any rhyme or reason in reading the elements. At the Tate for *Roni Horn a.k.a. Roni Horn* in 2009 some of the elements of *Still Water* were installed in the same gallery, though each plate was not numbered (figure 14). In an interview with Lynne Cooke, Horn discusses how the work can also be installed like *Some Thames*, each lithograph hung alone throughout different spaces in a museum, such as entryways, passages, or stairwells between galleries, "so that it won't be possible to see more than one at any time."[99] Scattered throughout a space, in "the service and transition areas as well as the exhibition spaces" the work not only redirects "the flow through a space", it also physically manifests the decentered nature of the work

[98] Horn, *Still Water,* book, 4.24-26.
[99] Interview with Lynne Cooke in *Roni Horn* (Phaidon, 2000), 18.

already present in the writing of the footnotes.[100] Installed in this way, an encounter with each element might function like the shots of water in *London*, as pauses in an experience of the space. Furthermore, if installed throughout the transitory spaces of a museum the work occupies peripheral places like the in-between places of late capitalism, the exploration of which is integral to the psychogeographic practice of juxtaposing past and present to suggest other possible futures.

Regardless of how they are encountered, installed on the wall or as a reproduction in a book, the individual images draw the viewer in closer with their detail and to read the smaller print of the footnotes. The sheer scale of the works, two and a half by three and a half feet compared to the small font of the numbers, forces a viewer to immerse themselves in the water's visual space to examine its surface and find the footnotes. Proximity also replicates the point of view of the water shots in *London*, positioning the viewer before water as if they stand on a bridge, boat, or bank and lean out over its surface, filling their perspective with water. Should a viewer encounter the images reproduced online or in the pages of a book at a smaller scale, perhaps tempting immersion less, the text of the footnotes alone build into the work the transportative type of viewing Horn herself experiences with water: "Water is lubricant to other places; it catalyzes memory and aspiration." "Water is lubricant to other places; I use my baths to travel."[101] Water, especially the river Thames, is never still.

[100] Cooke, *Roni Horn*, 18.
[101] Horn, *Still Water*, book, 7.28-29.

In her dispersion of footnotes across the surface, of elements throughout spaces of a gallery, and of the viewer's train of thought through questioning, Horn's work replicates the movement of walking alongside a river, of the mind in relation to water, and juxtaposes it with *Still Water*'s still captures of water. She imagines, looking at these images of water, the sounds it makes, and explains how sound, and one's self, travels near water: "Water brings the distant near, bits of sound: sighs, gurgles, sucks, almost voices, connecting you with some other place, some other time, an experience from far away or long ago."[102] She makes water a verb, figuring the act of looking as flowing, at times still, but containing potential and power to transport. Water is "an act of perpetual relation."[103] *Still Water* figures a wandering viewer whose experience of space is always already incomplete, who stops for snacks and to ruminate, akin to Robinson, who wanders the streets of London and along the rivers Brent and Thames, stopping to process his thoughts as he stares out over the water, traveling in his mind.

Though the viewer of *Still Water* is not the same as Robinson, the comparison allows us to narrow and specify what the work does. The comparison allows us to understand looking as generative and creative, similar to reading for de Certeau. As for de Certeau, one's personal set of experience, learned because lived, leads one to create anew with each relation to the work. Figured alongside the psychogeographic tradition Keiller's work partakes in, personal anecdotes are figured as evidence viable and constitutive of a narrative of the viewer's encounter with a place. Just as the political

[102] Horn, *Still Water*, book, 4.10.
[103] Ibid, 8.27.

interruptions of Robinson and the narrator's walks are included in the narration of the film, so are the water shots; the mapping of the personal occurs alongside and in relation to the political and the visual. Furthermore, the structure of psychogeographic narratives give us a visual vocabulary with which to understand how Horn's viewer vacillates between polarities of movement and stillness, immersion and isolation, surface and depth.

Travelling through Text and Image

Although one might stop for a second, standing still while looking does not mean one is at rest: "When I look at water, especially this water, I find myself wondering about it: its mechanics, its poetics, and so on. I wander in my thoughts. I go places. Water is lubricant to other places."[104] In its psychogeographic mode of looking, Horn's *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example)* creates a viewer who is constantly moving. As a part of its practice, psychogeography includes not only periods of walking or trekking, but also breaks for eating and re-tying shoelaces and pauses for rumination, making records, and doing research. This shifting between movement and stillness is replicated in *Still Water* by the viewer's own shifting between visual and textual encounters, sometimes motionless when focusing on a particular spot in the water or mulling over the content of a footnote, sometimes on the move when their eyes wander over ripples in the water's surface, seek out new footnotes, or read through the text.

The transportative nature of *Still Water* is emphasized by its mobilization of text and image together. By using only text or only image, Horn would not be able to communicate the sense of frisson or electricity because there would be no space of movement between the two. The footnotes superimposed on the water's surface move the viewer's eyes around the image, enlivening the still photograph. Horn herself acknowledges that water as it appears in the photographs is not water as one would ever experience it:

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104 Horn, *Still Water,* book, 7.26.

> [18] This photograph is an image of a moment on the Thames. It is also a moment similar to other moments of moving water and especially moments of rapidly moving water that were hardly visible. But you extrapolate from your experience, you recognize things you've never actually seen—things that simply weren't visible. (Photographs often portray things unseen or unseeable in a simple sense. Like things that occur too slowly or too quickly.) You recognize things you've never actually seen—even though you may have watched them as you may have watched this river for hours at a time. But you know it's a river, water moving from here to there. You feel like you've seen it before. But you haven't, what you've actually seen is a slur: the form a river often takes in real time.[105]

Based on your experience of water and other rivers and from the title, you can extrapolate what is represented as, in fact, a river, although it lacks the movement that defines a river, "seen as a slur." Horn completely slows down the viewer's experience of water in the photographs, halting it from the slur of a normal experience of a river and revealing detail and creating time to explore its texture in its stillness. Despite this inertness, instead of completely divorcing it from its flowing essence, she animates a viewer's experience of the water with her scattering of footnotes, maintaining the motion inherent to the element. Though a viewer might linger over one footnote, or a cluster on the surface of the water, the impulse to seek out the corresponding text of the numbers or continue exploring the water's mottled surface will probably prevail, maintaining the river's mobility and linking it to the viewer's movement.

Now, grasping the knowledge that emerges from this movement, the moments of resonance or rented knowledge, is another matter altogether. It, like the river, is ungraspable, usually existing as a slur of movement between the image and the text, like the vacillation of a psychogeographer from withdrawal from the world to research to

[105] Horn, *Still Water*, book, 7.18.

engagement with crowds and streets. This vacillation, this movement between the read and the real, creates space for frisson or friction. A sensation of knowing without owning, a momentary knowledge that one normally experiences unacknowledged when maneuvering through the space of everyday life. This knowledge is so common as to be shared and yet, as it derives from movement, we cannot capture it to hold onto.

Horn creates an experience of looking in *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example)*, that does not make it possible to grasp this knowledge, which, like water, is "never quite graspable, even as an ice cube."[106] But the viewer's experience of looking at the work, constantly shifting between stillness and movement, might allow them to dwell in this gap and become more aware of how this excitative form of looking can be generative and creative. In his inclusion of black and white photographs in his novels, W. G. Sebald is another example of an artist who replicates for a reader a situation of generative movement between text and image. Examining in particular the way photographs are used in his 2001 novel *Austerlitz* might allow us to closer approximate the type of knowledge that emerges through such excitations.

The first instance of photographs in *Austerlitz* occurs on the second page, when the narrator, having just arrived that day in Antwerp, takes refuge from his wandering through the city in the Nocturama section of the zoo abutting the central train station. The Nocturama is a dark area of the zoo that houses many exotic nocturnal animals. The first photos (figure 15) come as the narrator explains he cannot remember the type of animals he saw, but does remember their large eyes: "all I remember of the denizens of the

[106] Horn, *Still Water*, book, 4.3.

Nocturama is that several of them had strikingly large eyes, and [first two photos] the fixed, inquiring gaze found in certain painters and philosophers who seek to penetrate the darkness which surrounds us [two photos] purely by means of looking and thinking."[107] The first two photos—indicated with brackets in the previous quote—, close-up shots of animal faces cropped to emphasize the eyes, perhaps depict the eyes of a bush baby and an owl. The second two images are of human faces cropped similarly to include only the eyes, the first an etching and the second which, I know, depicts Wittgenstein's eyes, who the narrator says Austerlitz resembles.[108]

Lacking a caption but proximate to text, the photos assume some deciphering effort on the part of the reader, a sort of active engagement, but do not dictate or overly determine the way they are to be understood. In fact, their lack of framing might constitute a framing or interpretive device itself. As we gather from the excerpted text surrounding these photographs, the combination introduces the intertwined activities of looking—whether at a work of art, at a book while reading, or at one's environment while on a walk—and thinking that concern most of Sebald's writings. In his recollection of the Nocturama, the narrator goes on to explain that he confuses his memory of the darkened zoo with the *Salle des pas perdu* (which translates into English "the room of the lost steps" or "the room of the not lost", depending on your translation of *pas* as "steps" or "not"), the central hall, a sort of liminal waiting space, connecting the various parts of the central train station in Antwerp: "If I try to conjure up a picture of that waiting room

[107] W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, translated by Anthea Bell (New York: The Modern Library, 2001): 4-5.
[108] "And now, whenever I see a photograph of Wittgenstein somewhere or other, I feel more and more as if Austerlitz were gazing at me out of it." Ibid, 41.

today I immediately see the Nocturama, and if I think of the Nocturama the waiting room springs to my mind."[109] The antechambers of courthouses, city halls, and train stations that opened onto all other areas of the building, spaces where people gathered, waited, and dispersed, were called the *Salle des pas perdu*. As such, whether translated as the room of lost steps—that, like Austerlitz's memory, may be recovered through the reader's actions—or as the room of nothing lost—as traces of the past remain and pool in a space—beginning the novel in this room offers the reader an idea of how its spaces will be inhabited by its characters and may by explored or occupied by themselves as they read. These passages that open the novel introduce the reader to one way photographs are used—to demonstrate newly introduced concepts visually—and the type of visual, locational, and temporal associations that will determine the narrator and Austerlitz's movement through time and space.

Placing these photographs within his text, Sebald introduces the reader to a form of looking at photographs that echoes John Berger's optimal activation of photographs. Although the photos may seem to be arbitrarily chosen, Sebald explains they come from his personal collection of photographs. The photographs precede and sometimes inspire his writing, as the photograph of the young boy in fancy dress on the cover of *Austerlitz*, in fact Sebald's uncle, initially inspired the novel.[110] Sebald himself found these photos in vintage shops, the majority coming from albums kept by middle-class families in the

109 Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 5.
110 Toby Green, Susan Sontag, Jürgen Wertheimer, and Richard Sheppard, "Three Encounters with W. G. Sebald (February 1992–July 2013)," *Journal of European Studies* 44, no. 4 (December 2014): 378–414.

1930s and 40s.[111] He explains his reasoning for including them, "as they form, these pictures, an intimate part of my working process, I saw no reason for excluding them from the book itself," suggesting that their reproduction serves to demonstrate the way his mind incorporates and extends out from visual prompts when writing. [112] In "Uses of Photography", John Berger differentiates between two ways a photograph functions, based on whether or not it is removed from an original context: private and public. A photograph is used privately in a family home where it is not removed from the continuity of its context, in that the subjects or setting it depicts are legible or familiar to those viewing it; a photograph functions publicly when it presents the viewer with an experience separate from themselves and their experiences, which eliminates the need for or function of memory and thereby any continuity of judgment and meaning is also lost.[113] He explains that these two uses of photography must be reconciled and combined to conceive of a third use of photography so that the medium may continue to be useful in resisting increasingly homogenizing and prescriptive societies and cultures of capitalism while preserving its connection to memory.

Sebald collects photographs that relate to his personal sphere of knowledge and those that were created by strangers, using them equally to spur his imagination. Including these photographs in their concomitant prose not only makes it possible for a reader to see in them what Sebald has seen, but it also allows a reader to recognize connections to referents they bring to the novel. Berger goes on to explain that

[111] Eleanor Wachtel, "Ghost Hunter", in *The Emergence of Memory: Conversations with W. G. Sebald*, edited by Lynne Sharon Schwartz (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2010): 41.
[112] Sebald quoted in Green, "Three Encounters," (no pages, online).
[113] John Berger, *About Looking* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980): 55.

photographs, though relics of a past they do not themselves narrate, when activated as part of a narrative would re-acquire a living context, because the living "take that past upon themselves, if the past becomes an integral part of the process of people making their own history" and would continue to exist in time.[114] In order to execute this alternative use of photographs, to construct a social context for the photograph, Berger argues one must take into account that the laws of memory operate radially (figure 16), "with an enormous number of associations all leading to the same event."[115] Activated radially, Berger explains, a photograph is placed in "narrated time" which incorporates the "personal, political, economic, dramatic, everyday and historic."[116] Taking this into account, a photograph's context incorporates memory, words, and other photographs to lead to a "surprising conclusiveness of that which *was* and *is*," a context that is never complete but leaves space for diverse interactions and readings.[117] Might it be possible to consider that Sebald activates and reanimates these photographs by placing them in the "narrated time" of his novels, which incorporate social and personal history, drama, and the explorations of everyday life?

If Sebald does take the past upon himself in this way, as Berger urges the living viewer, so that "the past becomes an integral part of the process of people making their own history" and the photographs can be enlivened and continue to exist in our time, does this mean only the few photographs Sebald chooses can achieve such presence? Or, if the context of the photograph constituted by a reader of Sebald's prose, whatever that

[114] Berger, *Looking*, 57.
[115] Ibid, 60.
[116] Ibid, 63.
[117] Ibid, 61.

context may be, incorporates, as Berger argues, memory, words, and other photographs into our reading of it, might this not echo the mode of looking that Horn and Keiller espouse in their photographic captures of the everyday? Each element in *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example)* could be interpreted as a record of a photograph "read" in this way, the footnotes including personal thoughts about wetness and fluidity, musings on visual cues, impersonal but editorialized accounts of suicides and murders in the river, references to songs about rivers and novels about the Thames, and questions to the viewer about their interaction with the work, about their time, and their specific experience. Thus, the work could also be read as suggesting this mode of looking to the viewer, as the text of some footnotes that address the viewer weaves in the narrated time of the interaction activated by them. One footnote self-referentially points to its physical context and weave that into the viewer's temporal context: "This footnote (and all the others) gives confluence to this spot on the paper ten inches down and twenty-five and a half inches over, to this undulation in the water, to this brownish-green color of the ink deployed to image the water, to the idea of water, all water, to the sensual surface of this paper, to the moment when you happened upon this number, and to you in that moment."[118] One can almost imagine this footnote as mapping the radials of the point's concentric layers of context from its place on the surface of the water, to the viewer standing in a gallery, to the viewer's affective and actual circumstances. Connecting the circumstances of looking at this work of art in a gallery to the looking the viewer does in other contexts, might the radial activation of a photograph not make them capable of

[118] Horn, *Still Water*, book, 9.22.

applying this mode of looking to water in their own life, even if they have never been to London and gazed into the cold dark depths of the Thames?

The other way that photography functions in *Austerlitz* provides more information for a viewer to make the leap from looking at an annotated photograph in a gallery to looking in everyday life. Beyond their context in narrated time, the photographs occupy space in the text of the novel, suggesting another way they might function adjacent to these water works. Situated in the text without captions, they are offerings to the reader in the same way the text is offered, for them to peruse and look at and interpret with perhaps the same freedom as they might the text. We are offered the photographs to inspect alongside the text, without guidance. However, the suggestion that the photographs might be those taken by Austerlitz throughout his life links them to the story. Austerlitz's own photographic practice provides a context for how we might read the photographs dispersed throughout the pages of the novel.

The narrator's first encounter with Austerlitz in the pages following the Nocturama episode introduces another way the photographs might be understood in the context of the novel. When he enters the *Salle des pas perdu*, the narrator notices Austerlitz is the only person there not staring into space. Instead, his eyes are wandering and dwelling on architectural features and details as he takes notes and makes sketches of the room. The narrator also observes Austerlitz retrieve his camera from his rucksack to take a photograph of the room. Noting that he cannot find the photos he must have taken in the *Salle des pas perdu* "among the many hundreds of pictures" that Austerlitz entrusts to the narrator later in their friendship, we understand this to be a common gesture for

Austerlitz.[119] Realizing this habit, a reader may begin to see the photos inserted into the text as souvenirs or visual aids for stories in Austerlitz's personal history as he recounts it to the narrator. For example, four small square photographs on page 76 (figure 17) seem to serve as examples of his early experiments in the medium, described on the opposite page, and others seem to correspond to photos in his collection from his trips to study architecture.

This impulse to photograph begins to emerge at key moments of stress, as if taking physical indices of his surroundings will stabilize him or clarify his flickering memories. When Austerlitz decides to go to Prague after hearing another refugee's story of escape on the radio, he goes to the Karmelitská, the state archives building, and has a sensation of dizziness on his initial visit. When he returns the next day, he notices the incredible architecture of the building's courtyard "where, in order to compose myself a little, I first took some photographs of the great inner court and the stairway leading up to the galleries, which in its asymmetrical construction reminded me of the follies built by so many English noblemen in their parks and gardens."[120] Here, Austerlitz uses photography as a way of grounding himself, compounding his comfort through relating the foreign building to aspects of British landscape architecture. He deploys active visual and associative methods including making connections to other forms of architectural knowledge to situate himself in the place spatially and formally.

[119] Sebald, *Austerlitz,* 7.
[120] Ibid*,* 149.

Another related incident occurs when he is traveling through the Czech Republic. While his train is stopped at a station "for some time", all he can remember is "that I went out on the platform to photograph the capital of a cast-iron column which had touched some chord of recognition in me."[121] He recognized it not because he had seen it before, but because it "seemed almost to approach the nature of a living being, might remember me and was, [...] a witness to what I could no longer recollect for myself."[122] This takes place during his train ride back to London, after having immersed himself in recollecting his childhood with his nanny, Vera, with whom he was reunited in Prague. He is unsure what draws him to photograph the column, but his entire journey is saturated with a sense of déjà vu too vague to even be termed that. It is more of a struggle with his own mind as he tries to recollect repressed memories of his own past. And so, in an attempt to hold onto the sense of recognition it sparked in him, Austerlitz takes a photograph of the column.

Austerlitz's use of photography as a stabilizing mechanism echoes another sense in which Sebald believes the photographs function in the text. He explains the photographs can "act like barriers or weirs which stem the flow. I think that is something positive, slowing down the speed of reading, as it were."[123] Inserted as they are without context beyond their situation on the page among the text and whatever associations or relations to the bracketing narrative may be derived, the photographs ask the viewer to decipher them, to make of them what they will, essentially forcing them to "stem the

[121] Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 221.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Wachtel, "Ghost Hunter," 42.

flow" of the narrative in taking time to examine them. This stemming of the flow is not unrelated to the pauses in narrative that the shots of water provide in *London*, as they punctuate Robinson and the narrator's psychogeographic wanderings. Nor is it unlike how we might imagine an encounter of one of the elements of *Still Water* in a transitory space of a museum to function, and the possibly ensuing perusal of its footnotes.

A reader will usually already take such pauses in reading or looking on their own to process, contemplate, or understand what they have been reading. Unlike breaks taken for food or to ask directions, these breaks are taken alone but fall within the context of the narrative of the experience, whether it be of a work of art or a walk. They are necessary to savor, comprehend, and live alongside a work. Thus, Austerlitz repeats the action of taking a photograph at instances when he feels uneasy or unstable, revealing the impulse to photograph as one associated with stability, grounding, grasping, and also the impulse to hold onto something.

Associated with his impulse to grasp is the slippery nature of sensations accessed through the act of looking. When he tries to hold onto images from memories brought up in his dreams, Austerlitz explains how the harder he tries to hold onto them the faster an image slips away from him: "as soon as I tried to hold one of these fragments fast, or get it into better focus, as it were, it disappeared into the emptiness revolving over my head."[124] Again using the terms of photography, Austerlitz compares accessing memory to the process of taking a photograph, both processes used to focus on and capture the slippery knowledge of a moment passed. He describes his initial forays into photography

[124] Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 219.

and how he was captivated by the process him in a similar way: “In my photographic work I was always especially entranced, said Austerlitz, by the moment when the shadows of reality, so to speak, emerge out of nothing on the exposed paper, as memories do in the middle of the night, darkening again if you try to cling to them, just like a photographic print left in the developing bath too long.”[125] Although it is not measurable, perhaps Sebald seeks to reproduce for the reader a feeling of connection when using text and image to communicate the magnitude of impression and equally strong guarantee of dissolution that qualify this momentary glimpse of clarity. The interplay among the text and photographs in *Austerlitz* communicates the slipperiness of the experience of a moment.

Horn’s footnotes convey a similar sense of slipperiness surrounding Horn’s own yearning to understand what it is about dark water that so repels, disgusts, and enthralls. As she never offers a concrete answer to what makes water dark and the circuitous nature of her work ensures there is no real conclusion, *Still Water* suggests that perhaps it is this slipperiness which one is after through looking.

The narrative or image presented in these ways alone is not enough, but used together, they might approach something more akin to the experience directly. However, if you try to hold onto any one aspect of this multiply constituted experience, to reduce it to one sensation in image or word, it will remain ungraspable. It is only through constant moving between the two that you might hold onto it. Figuring this type of knowledge as just out of reach requires a viewer to wander, building motion and concomitant stillness

[125] Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 77.

into the experience of reading or looking, further figuring the viewer of Horn's work as a psychogeographer. In psychogeography, the stillness often associated with an experience of looking is concomitant with the movement of walking, gazing, and reading that also constitute the activity of looking; although one may be still for a moment, the moment is part of the larger narrative of movement. To counteract divorcing the water from the context of the river, Horn preserves in her photos the sensation of movement. Despite being still captures of the surface of water, the experience of looking at each element and reading the footnotes provides for the viewer an experience that is yet moving, in other words, it is still water.

Horn's *Still Water* clearly participates in a mode of viewing that friction with Keiller and Sebald's works illuminates. In varied ways, each work grapples with an experience of looking that is indeterminate, transdisciplinary, that combines images and texts, historical and literary research, that emerges through movement at a wandering, leisurely pace, and emerges from a search for a way to maintain a sense of self and agency, albeit briefly, against a larger homogenizing world concerned with commercial, global, or fast-paced thinking. To communicate this sense of experiencing the world leads Robinson and the narrator and Austerlitz to decentered wanderings between peripheral spaces of late capitalism and historically or culturally significant sites, linking them through the narrative of their own journey. Despite the resonance of these works with each other, it is not in their similarities or unification that they are exciting. Rather, as they all seek to reveal, it is in their differences that they multiply and expand the possibilities of looking.

Given the generative nature of their differences, can we consider Roni Horn's work as constituting a psychogeographic practice? And if so, how might the inclusion of Horn's works under the umbrella of psychogeography change the term's connotations? Horn's series of books, *To Place*, might serve as the most overt example of her engagement with psychogeography. Each book in the series not only records her interactions with spaces in Iceland, revealing its multifaceted nature—its sheep folds, its hot springs, its lava fields, and its bluffs—their shifting focus also reflects her changing research and artistic interests, how the island affects her impression of herself and how her successive interactions change her impression of the island. According to the constitutive aspects of psychogeography outlined above, Horn's work constitutes a psychogeographic practice: she walks through and inhabits places, she observes her interaction therewith and records it in writing and photography; she produces a series of artist books with these records that combine them with works of art and research done simultaneously and thus concomitantly with her wanderings. Thus, she names the series after the purpose they serve for her, they help her *to place* herself, to locate herself in space and time.

If we consider Roni Horn a psychogeographer, then the potential identity of the psychogeographer shifts. Walking the streets throughout history, the psychogeographer accrued social anonymity that used to be gendered but may or may not be now. The status of the *flâneur* in the nineteenth century—as a wealthy man with leisure time to stroll about, observe the latest fashions and trends, and write—goes almost without saying. Recent feminist reevaluations of the term, some of which have suggested or

undermined the concept of a feminine *flâneuse*, point to the term's generalization about identity; namely, that the freedom to wander peripheral sites and empty streets unbothered or to safely lose oneself in a crowd is not neutral, but the privilege of a particular, white, male, upper-class identity.[126] The majority of British psychogeographers are men—Will Self comments upon this, referring to psychogeographers as a "fraternity" of "middle-aged men in Gore-Tex, armed with notebooks and cameras, stamping our boots on suburban station platforms, politely requesting the operators of tea kiosks in mossy parks to fill our thermoses, querying the destinations of rural buses."[127] Like the *flâneur*, the psychogeographer is typically figured as male, probably because of the assumed ease with which "he" can move through space, undisturbed by passersby. However, one of the ways that Horn troubles the role of the psychogeographer is by not assuming anything, including their ability to move through space. I do not mean to posit Horn herself as a *flâneuse*, but rather that the practice itself is a verb, and assumes at its center not some kind of essence, but rather a practice. There may be assumptions about these positions, about who is able to participate in this practice, but the act of walking itself does not determine who they are. Instead, because the practice itself is based upon vacillation and flashes of ambiguity, it translates the noun into a verb. In this way, figuring Horn's works as psychogeographic, particularly *Still*

[126] To name a few key texts in this reexamination, *The Invisible Flâneuse?: Gender, Public Space, and the Visual in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, edited by Aruna D'Souza and Tom McDonough (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); Kathryn Brown, "A space for the imagination: depicting women readers in the nineteenth-century city" in *Intimate Metropolis: Urban Subjects in the Modern City*, edited by Vittoria Di Palma, Diana Periton and Marina Lathouri (London and New York: Routledge, 2009): 58-71; Deborah L. Parsons *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women* (London: Virago Press, 1991).
[127] Self, *Psychogeography*, 12.

Water (The River Thames, for Example), offers the possibility to expand the concept of a psychogeographer to include any person who wanders and looks to place themselves in relation to a space. As the city explored by psychogeographers expanded to include global forms of communication, and the *flâneur*'s descendants move to explore post-industrial environments, the privileged and monolithic identity of the psychogeographer must be undercut. The term can be reevaluated, expanding to include walkers of varied identities and experiences of contemporary urban space, and directly building into its practice an awareness of the polarities between which its wanderings and its participants swing.

Or, instead of modifying the term "psychogeographer," the tools a viewer receives from looking at art can be read as expanding to include the wandering of psychogeography. Inherent in the title of Horn's expanding book series *To Place* is another key to the way that including Horn might transform the looking associated with psychogeography. As discussed above, Horn figures "place" as a verb, as in, to create a place, to make a place, and engages in placemaking through her books. She also activates "to place" as "to locate", that is, to locate oneself in a place, as on a map, or, perhaps less exactly, to name the "place" one is affectively occupying, as when one says "I'm not in a good place" or "he's in a better place these days." In this way, Horn acknowledges the affective dimension, in addition to those of time and space, through which psychogeographers and viewers of art alike ambivalently move.

Similar to emotion, affect is the way one's emotions manifest through behavior in relation to a space or situation. Like water changing based on the shape or temperature of

its environment, one's affect changes moment to moment based on one's internal and external environment: one's thoughts and memories, the things one reads or looks at, and the spaces and people one interacts with. In her work *You Are the Weather*, made from 1994 to 1995, Horn acknowledges the relation between the way weather changes moment to moment and the fluctuations in one's affect moment to moment (figure 18). *You Are the Weather* consists of one hundred portraits of the same girl, Margrét Haraldsdóttir, in the water, each taken only a few seconds apart from the next in a couple of hot springs in Iceland. Though separated by only a few seconds, Margrét's expression, the light, her hair, and the water shift minutely so that each snapshot comprises an entirely different portrait of her (figure 19). Horn has made comparisons between the words used to describe our affect and the weather, both of which can be described as cold, stormy, nasty, bright, dry, or nice to comment on how the complexities of weather in Iceland mirror those of the human affect. In *Still Water*, Horn draws on this work, referring to the fluctuation of water with words used to describe one's affect:

> You say water is troubled or calm. You say water is rough and restless. You say water is disturbed. You say water is quiet. Water is serene and sometimes clear, it might be pure and then it is brilliant. Water is heavy; that's a fact. Water is often calm, even placid. Water is still and then it might be deep as well. Water is cold or hot, chilly or tepid. You say water is brash or brisk, sometimes crisp. You say water is soft and hard. You say water irritates and lubricates. You say water is foul. You say water is fresh. You say water is tranquil and languorous. You say water is sweet.[128]

Just as water can be more than one thing at once—it can be deadly and alluring, it can irritate and lubricate—we do not often feel only one thing in relation to a situation, but

[128] Horn, *Still Water*, book, 10.1.

feel hurt and angry, or happily frustrated. We move among the network of constellated and interrelated affects according to our environment. *Still Water (The River Thames for Example)* operates from and allows a viewer to dwell in an ambivalent affective position, where multiple affects exist. As Horn says in footnotes of plate 6, "It's so easy to project yourself onto water. Its violence, calmness, changeableness are mine (or yours). I can't separate its moods from my own. But then I don't really believe they're separate anyways."[129]

Robinson seems to conduct his excursions from an ambivalent position in *London*: he is paranoid in his seeking of traces of forgotten histories in the city for camaraderie and reassurance amid his current experience of its capitalist alienation, and yet reparative in assigning hopeful meaning to sites. Can we not also understand a viewer of *Still Water* as figured to operate from a similarly ambivalent position, enacting paranoid readings when seeking out confirmation of their own thoughts in the text, and reparative readings when adding their own associations to those Horn proposes in the footnotes? Can we further conceive that Horn, in her entreaty to the viewer, asking them questions and encouraging their gaze to roam and their thoughts to drift in relation to water, asking if they have the same thoughts when they look at water, is suggesting the viewer occupy this mode when actually looking at water outside of a gallery?

Perhaps this is yet a stretch because Sedgwick suggests the terms with which to discuss such an ambivalent position, or even to figure a reparative position, do not yet exist. However, as seen in Robinson's walks, one such term that already exists to qualify

[129] Horn, *Still Water*, book, 6.24.

the reparative position is hope. Sedgwick explains that hope can be used by a reparatively positioned reader to try "to organize the fragments and part-object she encounters or creates."[130] Robinson's dedication of alternative monuments be understood as one such organization of fragments, especially in the way it comforts and motivates Robinson to continue his walks despite his ailing health and repeated disappointments. The self-led interaction that *Still Water* engenders and Horn's entreaty to a viewer to see themselves as a reflection of water might be read as her hinting at the hope inherent in dark water and other opaque situations.[131]

Douglas Crimp begs his readers to dwell in affective ambivalence to avoid losing hope and reducing the complexity of affects and politics during the AIDS crisis in 1989.[132] Based on his personal and shared experiences of the opaque effects and affect of the AIDS epidemic, Crimp argues for the acknowledgement of mourning as an affective tactic of survival alongside and concomitant with militancy. Crimp deftly applies the concepts of mourning and melancholia proposed by Freud to the conflicting sentiments provoked by the profound and widespread loss gay men were experiencing in 1989, when this essay was written. Crimp situates his discussion at the conflict within the gay male community between viewing mourning as defeatist and the activist preference for immediately transforming mourning into militant mobilization against the worsening crisis through activist organizations such as ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power).

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[130] Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading," 146.
[131] "When you look at water, you see what you think is your reflection. But it's not yours. (You are a reflection of water.)" Horn, *Still Water*, book, 6.25.
[132] Douglas Crimp, "Mourning and Militancy," *October* 51 (Winter 1989): 3-18.

Taking care to be clear that he is not arguing against militancy, Crimp makes the case that the gay community cannot continue to ignore and repress the psychic process of mourning. Instead, they—and Crimp includes himself here—must acknowledge their own ambivalence and confusion regarding how to live in the face of massive loss and the fact that such ambivalence keeps them from mourning. Crimp calls for the gay community to recognize their terror, guilt, and profound sadness in the face of the AIDS crisis and to try to hold onto this sense of mourning and loss while also militantly mobilizing, instead of quashing the former for the sake of the latter. Crimp's account demonstrates the irreducibility of his experience: both conflict and care emerge from the very specificity of the marginalized queer individual's position.

Crimp argued that, in order for AIDS activists to avoid burn-out and the harmful side-effects of repression, they had to dwell in a position of ambivalence. They had to allow themselves to hold onto and honor the memories of those lost while also creating space to mobilize their love and loss towards activism. Though this sounds incredibly labor-intensive, Crimp's call for the community to allow painful memories to motivate their visibility resonates with de Certeau's characterization of the function of memory. According to de Certeau, memory is in decay when it is no longer touched or affected by one's actions in the present: "It constructs itself from events that are independent of it, and it is linked to the expectation that something alien to the present will or must occur. Far from being the reliquary or trash can of the past, it sustains itself by *believing* in the existence of possibilities and by vigilantly awaiting them, constantly on the watch for

their appearance."[133] Just as Crimp argues that to mourn and to mobilize is not to dishonor but rather to activate the memories of those lost, de Certeau suggests that memory can be mobilized to lead to an unexpected future. That Crimp insists on revisiting and re-evaluation of memory and experience to preserve mutability in the present suggests a sort of tentative hope. We might understand the vigilance and mutable engagement proffered by Horn in *Still Water* as evidence she has a similar sort of hope of perceptiveness for her viewers not only while exploring her work, but to be carried into their continued visual explorations of the world. Thus, an ambivalent affective position, constituted and including movement between multiple affects, is built into the psychogeographer figured by *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example)*.

[133] De Certeau, *Everyday Life,* 86-7.

An Ending by Way of the Beginning, or, Where to End but at the Beginning?

The viewer is introduced to the keys to *London*'s psychogeographic project—its shots of the surface of water—during the first expedition by an intertitle that says only "UTOPIA." This intertitle comes after they wander back from their foray to Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, and Radnor Gardens, where they had met two musicians from Peru, spent the night, and awoken to spring in the valley of the river Thames. The two walk to Brentford and continue along the river, thinking of spending the night at a hotel on the old coach road to Bristol, but were turned away by a landlord, who "swore at us and said that he had better ways of making a living," an oblique but pointed euphemism. They continue their walk back into central London past the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. Spending the day resting while Robinson teaches, the narrator drifts to a lake, where Robinson later joins him and the two lie down and fall asleep. The intertitle, while it may originally be read as comment upon their respite, is followed by the first shot of the surface of the water shot from overhead (figure 20). The water's surface is littered with organic and inorganic debris: branches and leaves, wrappers, bright scraps of unnaturally orange and blue plastic, all swirling together, merging and spiralling, indicating while also obscuring the detail of the surface of the water, which appears a muddy and uneven brown beneath the detritus. One presumes the shot depicts the river or lake where the two have laid down to rest, and is overlaid with a foreboding and serious monologue:

> In the nostalgias of the electronic age, hunter gatherer economies supported affluent egalitarian societies saturated with understanding of inner experience and proficient in art. Even in the Kalahari Desert, the working week seldom exceeded 20 hours and half the population was skilled in healing, rain making or hunting

> magic by means of visions and out of body travels in ceremonies of music, dance, and trance.

Comparing as it does the lifestyle of "the electronic age" to that in the Kalahari Desert, it sounds like an excerpt from an anthropological or sociological study, or perhaps the writings of one of the group Robinson studies, that drifts out of his brain as he dozes off. It is at first unclear exactly what the shot depicts, so the origin and intent of this excerpt figures mysteriously beyond its delineation through difference of the society these two men are intent on exploring.

The next morning, they walk to Hammersmith and visit the house of William Morris, a textile designer who revived the Arts and Crafts movement in Great Britain. The narrator says they "remembered what we used to think about the future: sophisticated engineering, low consumption, renewable energy, public transport. But just now London is all waste without a future, its public spaces either void or the stage sets for spectacles of 19th century reaction, endlessly reenacted for television." Their hopes and utopian musings, quashed by the reality of the river, is followed by the recitation of Rimbaud's poem, "The Bridges", preceded by another intertitle. Following the recitation is the second shot of water,[134] the *first* shot of water clear and undisturbed by floating rubbish, shot diagonally with small waves and sunlit, nothing recognizable in its frame, as if looking out into the middle of a river from its banks or a low bridge. And then the third shot of water, its surface swirling, roiling, tidal currents stirring it from below. These three shots are taken at different angles and reveal vastly different images of water.

[134] See figure 8.

Though visually unified in their subject, they do not homogenize or flatten its visual manifestation, hinting at the multiplicity that lies hidden or forgotten below the water's at-times cluttered or opaque surface. Instead, these shots serve to unify the return and setting out, the drifting and pointed seeking, the river's history and its present, and the rest and despair that the journeys will knit together: Robinson's monuments and the election results, his equally weighty moments of joy and of devastation, their reunion and their mission. Not repairing, but patching, placing side by side or within the same stream these contradictory or opposite sensations tied to the river's edge, and woven together within London by the river's winding endurance.

London begins with the narrator declaring, "It is a journey to the end of the world." Spoken brashly with a bit of pomposity that can be read as ironic, this might be thought of as poking fun at the totalizing yearnings of monolithic records of history and thought that seek to gather and preserve all under their auspices. Comparatively, there is almost no sense of an ending in *London.* Instead, the film peters out after Guy Fawkes' Day on November fifth. As its narration wanes and more selections from the third act of Beethoven's string quartet No. 15 take its place, it unsettles its over-confident beginning. The film's focus on communicating the psychogeographic project of the two characters above offering an ending reflects how the psychogeographic search for utopia, that takes us through all spaces and accompanies us through all our time on earth, is constantly pointing us beyond. The type of looking proffered by these sources slow us down to remind us of the constant movement forward and to suggest we counter our drive with a

bit of stillness, the juxtapositions they offer possibly leading to more than our sincerest strivings could.

Figures

Figure 1. Plate 11 from book *Still Water*, SITE: Santa Fe, 2000, pages unnumbered. Reproduction of element of *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example)*.

Figure 2. Plate 13 from book *Still Water*, SITE: Santa Fe, 2000, pages unnumbered. Reproduction of element of *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example)*.

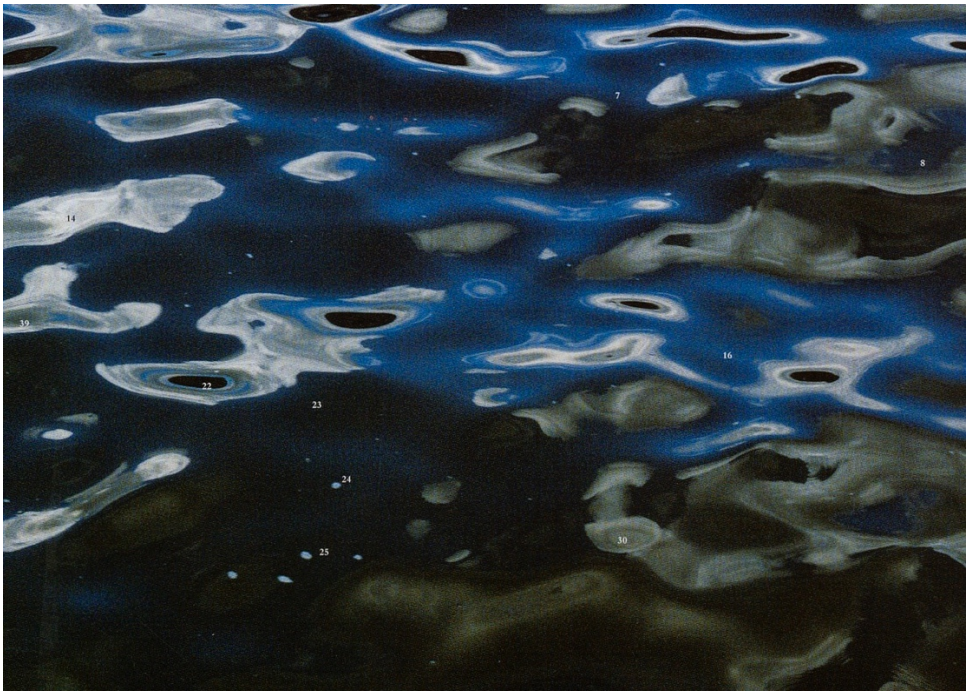


Figure 3. Detail showing annotations from plate 13 from book *Still Water*, SITE: Santa Fe, 2000, pages unnumbered.

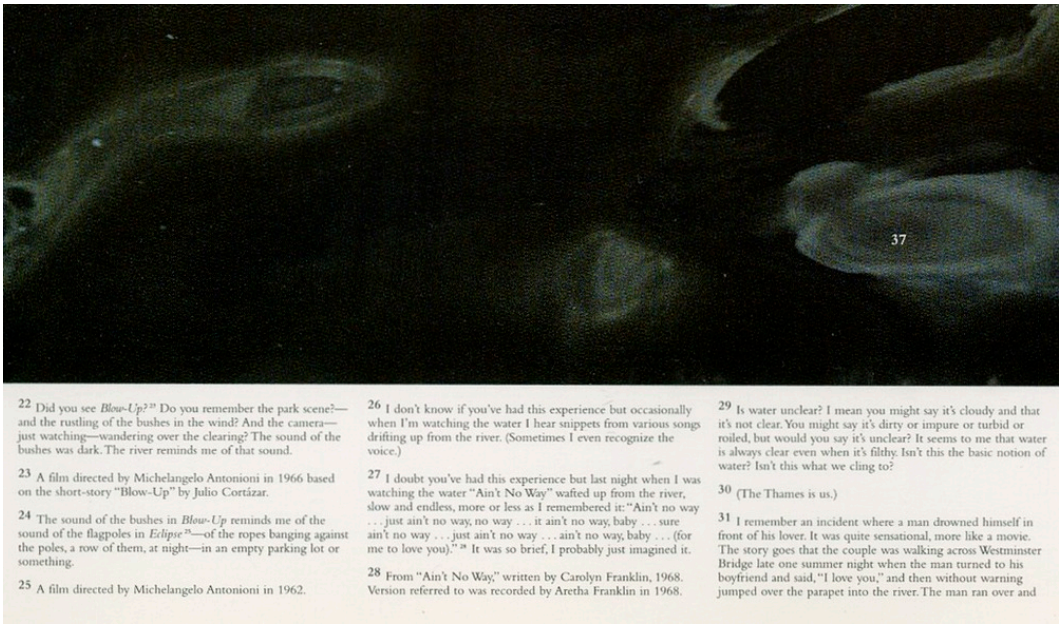


Figure 4. Detail showing footnotes from plate 13 from book *Still Water*, SITE: Santa Fe, 2000, pages unnumbered.

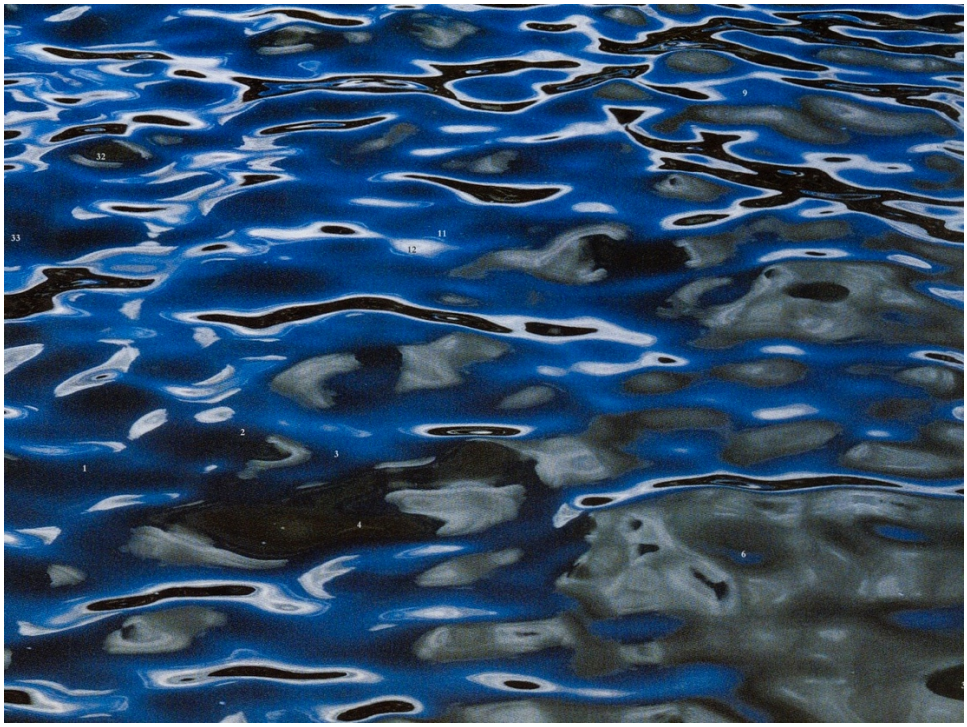


Figure 5. Detail showing annotations in black and white colored font from plate 13 from book *Still Water*, SITE: Santa Fe, 2000, pages unnumbered.


Figure 6. Constantin Guys, *Champs-Elysées*, 19th C. Musée du Petit Palais (Paris, France). https://library.artstor.org/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822001689650.

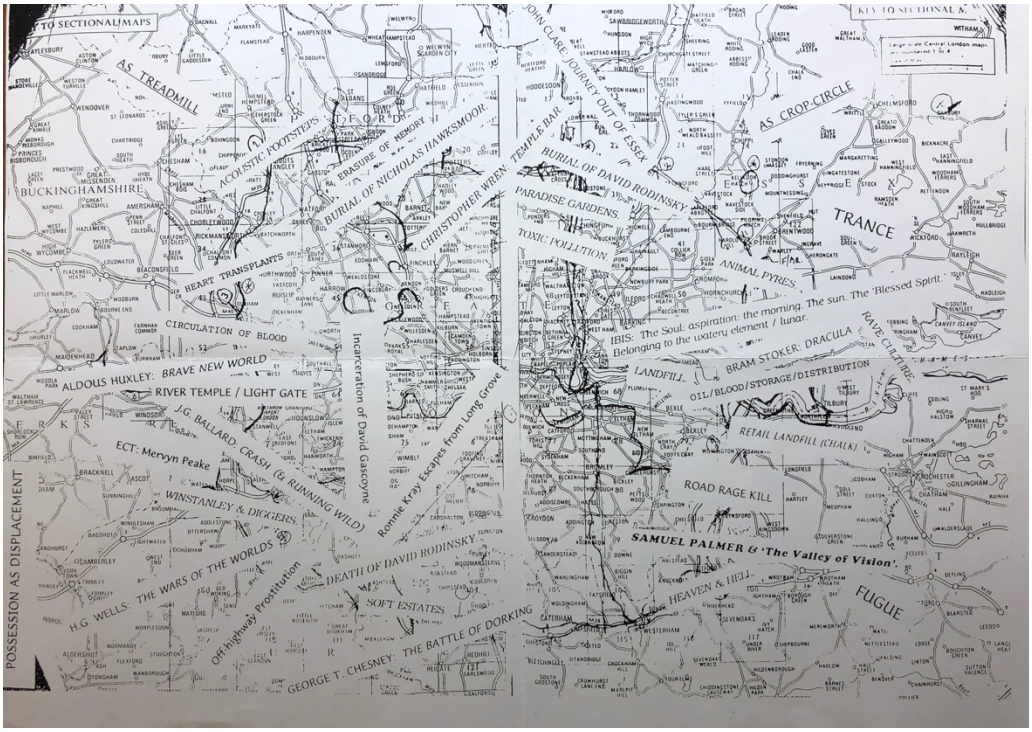


Figure 7. Photocopied map of London with places, names, and concepts collaged. Box 29, Folder 5, "London Orbital, early notes, research", Iain Sinclair Papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

Figure 8. Second shot of water. Still from *London*, dir. Patrick Keiller, 1994.

Figure 9. Third shot of water. Still from *London*, dir. Patrick Keiller, 1994.

Figure 10. Canary Wharf. Still from *London*, dir. Patrick Keiller, 1994.

Figure 11. Fifth shot of water. Still from *London*, dir. Patrick Keiller, 1994.

Figure 12. Seventh shot of water. Still from *London*, dir. Patrick Keiller, 1994.

Figure 13. Fourth shot of water. Still from *London*, dir. Patrick Keiller, 1994.

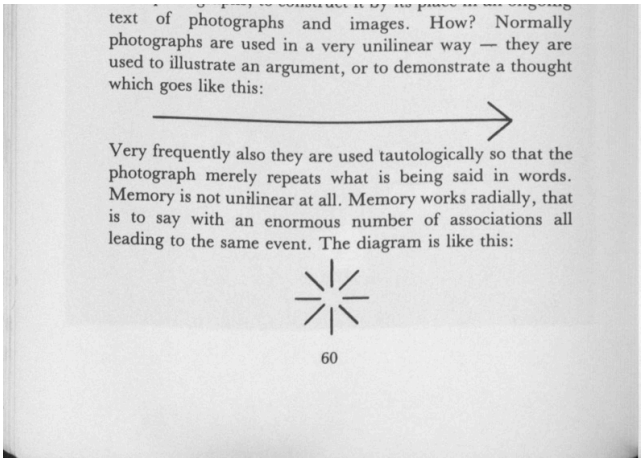
Figure 14. Installation shot of elements of *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example)* (hanging on wall in background) as part of the exhibition *Roni Horn a.k.a. Roni Horn* at the Tate Modern in London in 2009. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth Zürich London. Photo © Tate.

nally went to see the Nocturama, which had first been opened only a few months earlier. It was some time before my eyes became used to its artificial dusk and I could make out different animals leading their sombrous lives behind the glass by the light of a pale moon. I cannot now recall exactly what creatures I saw on that visit to the Antwerp Nocturama, but there were probably bats and jerboas from Egypt and the Gobi Desert, native European hedgehogs and owls, Australian opossums, pine martens, dormice, and lemurs, leaping from branch to branch, darting back and forth over the grayish-yellow sandy ground, or disappearing into a bamboo thicket. The only animal which has remained lingering in my memory is the raccoon. I watched it for a long time as it sat beside a little stream with a serious expression on its face, washing the same piece of apple over and over again, as if it hoped that all this washing, which went far beyond any reasonable thoroughness, would help it to escape the unreal world in which it had arrived, so to speak, through no fault of its own. Otherwise, all I remember of the denizens of the Nocturama is that several of them had strikingly large eyes, and

the fixed, inquiring gaze found in certain painters and philosophers who seek to penetrate the darkness which surrounds us

purely by means of looking and thinking. I believe that my mind also dwelt on the question of whether the electric light was turned on for the creatures in the Nocturama when real night fell and the zoo was closed to the public, so that as day dawned over their topsy-turvy miniature universe they could fall asleep with some degree of reassurance. Over the years, images of the interior of the Nocturama have become confused in my mind with my memories of the *Salle des pas perdus,* as it is called, in Antwerp Centraal Station. If I try to conjure up a picture of that waiting room today I immediately see the Nocturama, and if I think of the Nocturama the waiting room springs to my mind, probably because when I left the zoo that afternoon I went straight into the station, or rather first stood in the square outside it for some time to look up at the façade of that fantastical building, which I had taken in only vaguely when I arrived in the morning. Now, however, I saw how far the station constructed under the patron-

Figure 15. The first black-and-white photographs inserted in *Austerlitz*. From W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 2001, p. 4-5.



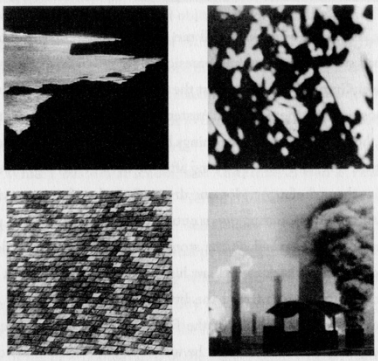
text of photographs and images. How? Normally photographs are used in a very unilinear way — they are used to illustrate an argument, or to demonstrate a thought which goes like this:

Very frequently also they are used tautologically so that the photograph merely repeats what is being said in words. Memory is not unilinear at all. Memory works radially, that is to say with an enormous number of associations all leading to the same event. The diagram is like this:

60

Figure 16. Detail of page showing diagram of radial activation from John Berger, "Uses of Photography," in *About Looking*, p. 60.

make a huge blaze, and would not mind if the whole school were reduced to a pile of rubble and ashes. After that I kept an eye on Gerald. I let him off tidying my room and cleaning my boots, and I made the tea myself and shared it with him, a breach of regulations regarded with disapproval by most of my fellow pupils and my housemaster himself, rather as if it were against the natural order of things. In the evenings Gerald often accompanied me to the darkroom where, at this time, I was making my first experiments with photography. This little cubbyhole behind the chemistry lab had not been used for years, but the wall cupboards and drawers still held several boxes with rolls of film, a large supply of photographic paper, and a miscellaneous collection of cameras, including an Ensign such as I myself owned later. From the outset my main concern was with the shape and the self-



contained nature of discrete things, the curve of banisters on a staircase, the molding of a stone arch over a gateway, the tangled precision of the blades in a tussock of dried grass. I took hundreds of such photographs at Stower Grange, most of them in square format, but it never seemed to me right to turn the viewfinder of my camera on people. In my photographic work I was always especially entranced, said Austerlitz, by the moment when the shadows of reality, so to speak, emerge out of nothing on the exposed paper, as memories do in the middle of the night, darkening again if you try to cling to them, just like a photographic print left in the developing bath too long. Gerald enjoyed helping me, and I can still see him, a head shorter than I was, standing beside me in the darkroom, which was dimly illuminated only by the little reddish light, holding the photographs in tweezers and swishing them back and forth in a sink full of water. He often told me about his family on these occasions, and most of all he liked talking about the three homing pigeons who would be expecting his return, he thought, as eagerly as he usually awaited theirs. Gerald's Uncle Alphonso had given him these pigeons a year ago for his tenth birthday, said Austerlitz, two of them a slaty blue, one snow-white. Whenever possible, if someone was going to Bala or Aberystwyth by car, he would send his three pigeons to be freed at a distance, and they always infallibly found their way back to their loft. Once, towards the end of last summer, Tilly the white pigeon did stay away much longer than the homeward flight should have taken her, after being dispatched on a test flight from Dolgellau only a few miles up the valley, and it was not until the following day, when he was on the point of giving up hope, that she finally returned—on foot, walking up the gravel drive with a

Figure 17. Four photographs inserted into text that might be from Austerlitz's early experiments in photography. From W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 2001, p. 76-7.

Figure 18. Roni Horn's *You Are the Weather,* 1994-95, installed at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City, during *Roni Horn a.k.a. Roni Horn*, in 2009. Thirty-six gelatin silver prints and sixty chromogenic prints, 10 ½ x 8 ½ in. each. Courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art. © Roni Horn.

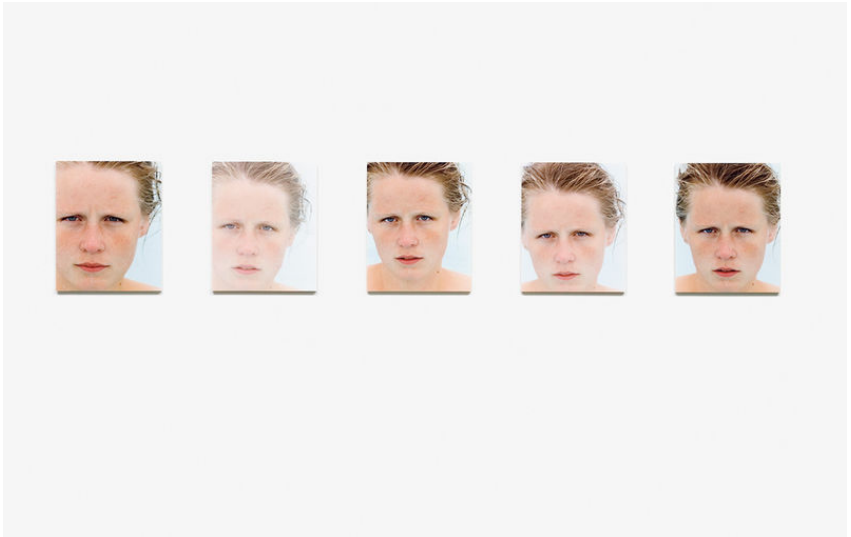


Figure 19. Detail of Roni Horn's *You Are the Weather*, 1994-95 installed at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City, during *Roni Horn a.k.a. Roni Horn*, in 2009. Courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art. Exhibition copy © Roni Horn.

Figure 20. First shot of water. Still from *London*, dir. Patrick Keiller, 1994.

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